

An abstract painting of a flower, likely a tulip, in shades of red, orange, and pink. The petals are layered and textured, with some areas appearing darker and more saturated than others. The background is dark and indistinct.


VOLUME X

Washington  
College  
Review

*A Liberal Arts Journal*



# WASHINGTON COLLEGE REVIEW



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# WASHINGTON COLLEGE REVIEW

## *A Liberal Arts Journal*

VOLUME X 2002



CHESTERTOWN, MARYLAND

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## Our Tenth Anniversary

What a joy it is to bring out our tenth volume of high-quality student writing and graphic art! This publication is a tribute to the constant efforts of the Washington College faculty and the *Washington College Review* editorial boards as well as a testimony to the creativity, talent, and disciplined work of our best students who not only contributed to these volumes but also helped edit, design, and produce them. We wish to recognize all the editors and contributors, whom we will list separately. One name is present on every editorial board: Meredith Davies Hadaway. Thanks to her vision, determination, and expertise, we produce a review of student work that is outstanding.

In this volume, we celebrate the poetry and prose of this year's Sophie Kerr Prize winner, Sarah Hanley Blackman. The excellent essay on Diderot was written in French by Michael Duck while he was studying abroad at the Université d'Artois in France. Creative writing, graphic art, and works initially prepared for classes in anthropology, art history, biology, and political science appear in this volume. We also have the pleasure of including papers presented at Washington College's first student research conference on Redefining the American Identity.

I wish to express my deep appreciation to all who have worked on this volume as well as to all whose efforts resulted in these first ten issues of the WCR!

Jeanette E. Sherbondy  
Editor



# Gull

A seagull tried to steal my ice cream.  
Vanilla Fudge. One scoop.  
(I walked three hours on the hills  
and fish slick side streets, paced  
the crescent harbor once, paced it again.  
I threw up lunch.)

Gulls throne the pilings like voluntary  
gods, throng the pier, bob dingy  
jetsam in the throb of wakes. Gulls  
lay their dirty eggs and let them roll.  
Stinking, they swab the streets, wrap  
railings with the fleshy petals of their feet.

I looked him in the eye. I  
said, "I will eat." He leaped.  
Battened to my hip—his flapping  
weight, the cruel crook of his beak.  
I hit him twice. His head snapped  
back (one hooded eye) and then he  
died. I think we both were equally  
surprised, but I survived.

*by Sarah Hanley Blackman*



# I Said Poison

I.

Finally, one of us says poison.

In four months our mouse has grown  
from baseboard shuffling to brazen  
eye, pink palm, slanting shadow tail.

I find the fact of him in pieces;  
the deliberate unburdening  
he leaves heaped in corners, paper  
shavings tidied from his bed and tumbled  
into the hall. Once I stopped to watch  
him wash. Steeple paws smoothing  
the surge of his skull, palming down neck  
to cup each of his own shoulders. His wrists  
are naked. I have seen them bend.

II.

At night, jet lag keeps me busy.  
I watch the bruised wrinkles of your eye  
lids, the roll of your cloistered  
eyes. Here is a secret I will never  
tell you: when I wrote, it was me  
I pictured. My calves sturdy  
and bare underneath boy's shorts.

My feet burrowing into carpet  
as I slit the envelope and laughed  
in the center of the room.  
You should have been in  
that chair by the window, legs  
tucked, one foot strutted  
against the table. You should  
have been smoking a cigarette,  
picking at your lower lip:  
watching me.

On the telephone we are sexed again.  
“How much longer?”  
“I don’t know. Soon.  
How’s our mouse?”

III.

This is what traps do: crack  
the backbone, snap the neck, mat  
fur with blood that pulps  
from muscle, crush  
the well-oiled roll of wrist.

This is what poison does:  
strips the walls of stomach,  
ulcers arteries, gluts  
intestine through grated teeth.

This is what is eaten: flour,  
rice, the plastic coating  
on the phone cord, the photo  
album from which your mother  
waves a nibbled stump and I  
am newly eyeless, blinking a smile  
at your cheek. The lining  
of your bowler hat. My scarf. One  
of my mittens. Some poetry. A piece  
of yellow cellophane I was saving  
just in case. The center of the Sunday  
paper. The soles of your good shoes.

IV.

At first I didn't recognize you  
with a beard, and me, six months settled  
into my new skin; thin, thinner,  
waving from the end of the carpeted  
hall while airplanes taxied behind my halo  
hair. I didn't recognize myself.

At first, I didn't know  
our mirrors, my face within  
and the long hall to our bedroom  
littered with suitcases, shoeboxes, bags  
of spine-broke books, your shirts,  
your papers, your pizza boxes, your life,  
the lives you'd lead for six months alone.

And me, alone while you paid the cabbie,  
rushing to our bedroom, standing  
on one foot like a stork, holding my breath,  
waiting for the first rustle, the first  
shadow, the first wary surveillance  
of space and change, the mouse.

V.

At dusk we walk to buy  
plums the color of the sky.  
I hold your hand, learning again.  
Three stories up our neighbor's  
curtains still shimmy in the wind.

This is their answer: Two  
mice are stiffening on the rug.  
Two mice are leaking commas  
of blood and heavy silence. Spent,  
stiffening, swung like wind  
chimes by their snapping tails,  
two mice are flung from a third  
story window. Two mice  
plummet, learn to fly.

*by Sarah Hanley Blackman*



# Eena, Eena, Eena



*Sarah Hanley Blackman*

*Miss Lucy had a steamboat.  
The steamboat had a bell (ding ding).  
Miss Lucy went to heaven,  
the steamhoat went to*

When she's in a good mood, she hums while she cooks and we eat peppery fried chicken, mounds of mashed potatoes, peas that pop between your teeth like heat. When she's in a bad mood, we have soup. The worst mood and there is nothing at all while she does sit-ups in the basement, crying.

Dad looks down from the top of the stairs, but all he can see is a wall. She is around the corner.

I am a bull. I snap my sharp tail through the air. I bunch all my muscles and crack deep in my eyes, teeter on the tips of my toes before falling forward and running running running like thunder on my hooves. Dad's leg is the red cape, even though it's blue jeans, and he does not get out of the way. His pants are woven, crossing and crossing as I get closer, and under them steel standing straight up and down and watching. It is too late for him. I am all snorting nostrils and huge humped shoulder and I smash into him, gore him with my glittering horns. He bleeds and Spanish women throw flowers through the hot air.

Hush Hush Hush says Dad, bending over me like a single horn curving against the sky. He says it like that, in threes. It reminds me of the mice, the blind ones who walk in circles and never get anywhere. I asked her if they were stupid, to walk like that to lose their tails. She said the book didn't say. She said they were just blind.

He can't even see her because of the way the stairs run into the wall. He could see the picture on the wall if he wanted to, but he's not looking. It's of a house with a yard and a fence. There's snow on the ground and a snowstorm still going in the air so everything is white sky and white ground and the white roof of the house. You wouldn't know it was a house at all if it weren't for the windows. You wouldn't know it was a fence if it weren't for the house. I always look.

I go to the cupboard for the graham crackers. Some of them I eat. The others I build into a box to keep things in, even though I know it will fall apart by morning and crumbs will get into the carpet and for God's sake do I want us to be overrun by vermin, driven into the streets by plague. We don't have a fence; when it snows there is nothing to stop the yard from becoming the road.

When I lie all the way flat on the carpet—stretched out with my shirt pulled up and my belly and my arms and the side of my face all feeling the same cat tongue scratching—when I lie all the way flat and press down with my whole body, I can stand up again and see how the carpet has smashed down under me. I can see exactly where I end.

*Hello Operator,  
please give me number nine.  
And if you disconnect me,  
I'll chop off your*

I know I am smart because I'm in the Bluebird group in my class. Everyone else is still a Robin, except for Susan Knox, who's a Bluebird too. We don't have bluebirds here. Dad says we do but they're so blue they melt into the sky and we can't see them. I don't believe him. Robins are brown and red but they don't melt into the ground. I see

them all the time in the yard, with their fat breasts and the worms cut and dangling in their bills. Robins have sharp eyes and claws on the tips of each of their toes. They jump about like they've got everything planned out. If they could talk, they'd say, "just so, just so," and I'd throw rocks at their heads.

Miss Fish gave me a star in reading and penmanship and math, but she said I needed to work on my citizenship. She told me after class, and I was late getting home and had to run the last part to make sure everything was on time afterwards. It's because I use all the blue crayons, she said. I never let the other kids have them and then I don't even draw pictures but just scribble scribble scribble 'til the whole page is blue, she said. It was selfish, is what she said, and I stood there and sucked on the tip of my braid until it was spiky and slick and thought about touching her arm with it. The hair would have left a trail behind it. A thin wet trail like a slug.

I didn't tell her why I needed all the blue. When you tell people you are giving them a present, they never see it right. Miss Fish needs a home. Her nails are bitten short and sometimes the edges of them bleed. Miss Fish has two crooked teeth on the bottom and bad breath. When she checks my math papers, she always smiles and looks right at me so I look right back and see her crooked teeth and never say anything about them even though they are yellow on the sides. There are five different kinds of blue in the big crayon box, and I use them all.

When the sun is on the ocean and you are underneath, you have to look up and let the bubbles out of your nose one by one so you can see where your air meets everybody else's. I went to the beach once, so I know. I also know that sand hurts when you fall on it, even though it looks soft, and that when you bring it in the house, you can't get it out again and it grits in your sandwiches for days but you can't complain because it was your bathing suit after all. I also know how to close my eyes and turn invisible and then fly around like a bat getting tangled up in people's hair.

When I came home, she said that she was bad in citizenship too. Our whole family on her side were loners, is what she said. I pictured

them chopping wood in a clearing with their backs to each other and their axes pumping over their shoulders and down thunk to the block. I pictured them standing out in the snow with their hands on the fence.

She said I got it from her like I got my hair and my beautiful fingers. She has beautiful fingers. They are long and white and can play the piano, pressing down each key and lifting up. I have useful fingers. I dig with them. I roll sticks around. I stroke slugs down their cold spotted backs, watch them shrink away from my beautiful beautiful finger that can press down on them until they press down on themselves and then lift up, soaring away into the air until it is too far for them to see. Until everything is free again and clear.

*Behind the 'fridgerator  
there was a piece of glass  
Miss Lucy sat upon it  
and broke her big fat*

Sometimes it rains. Not enough to make puddles or sting your skin when the drops bounce off, but halfway there. Enough to make the world damp and pulpy. When it rains like that, I go out into the backyard and take off my shoes and take off my socks and put my socks in my shoes and put them both under the rain-spout, just in case there's a flood.

When it rains like that, the slugs come out. They slide up onto the wood of the fence. They curve over the tops of the stones. They glue themselves to the rose stems and the tomato plants and slick long x's over the top of the brick pile that is going to be a fish pond where the fish will circle and make faces and I will tickle them until they giggle bubbles. Dad says.

Tiny yellow slugs cling to the grass, big tiger slugs ooze over the patio. When you touch a slug's eye, he pulls it all the way back into his skull, but you can't learn how. When you touch a slug's back, he flinches away from your finger and around your finger at the same time.

There are things I can do. Prick the tips of my fingers on the

holly bush. Mash holly berries under my thumb. Scrub my hair over my eyes until I am wild. Tip back back back so I am face-to-face with the sky. Stomp in the mud and watch it burp up between my toes. Sing to the slugs.

All my songs I sing to the slugs, and they sing back slug songs because that is what they have. They have to because I am their queen. I am Slugeena and I stomp in the mud and tear up the grass and snort air out of my nostrils like it was for throwing. I build a stack of bricks higher and higher and higher until there are no more bricks.

Come on, you slugs, I say to the slugs. Let's see you climb that!

Eeena, Eeena, Eeena, sing the slugs and I press them with my fingers until they burst and leak because they will not even try. Then I knock the bricks down, crying.

She comes out onto the back porch. Jesus, she says. Jesus, you are filthy.

She stands there and I am filthy. I look her shoes which are white shoes. Come Here, she says. Come Here she says. Come Here COME HERE COME HERE.

I wipe my hand on the front of my dress and smear slugs into the cloth. Snot drips over my lip, I let it, pick a scab on my elbow until it bleeds. I scrub a slug into my hair. I watch her eyes until she leaves. Eeena, Eeena, Eeena, sing the slugs.

*Ask me no more questions*

*I'll tell you no more lies*

*The boy's are in the bathroom*

*zipping up their*

There are two doors in the room where I sleep. Both of them are always shut at night because dark is good for sleeping but sometimes when the hall door is shut the closet door comes open and there are white rats in there with red eyes as big as bars of soap. I've seen them. The hallway is long, furred with carpet, sharp at the end like a tooth. Their door is just a door.

I open it, and she is reading a book that is too much for me even though I know most of the words and I am a Bluebird and I peck her. I open the door and the light is off and there is breathing breathing breathing that is almost more than the windows can hold. If it broke the windows, outside would be a jungle where tigers stood with the bamboo shading their eyes like stripes. You would never see them, only hear the brush of their tails sweeping the paths behind you. If you were quiet for a long time you might hear them roaring, far away, like their throats were all wrapped up in damp dishtowels.

I open the door and the light is low and stretching. Pecks are like kisses, and the hairs of her arms smell like sleep all the way into morning. Or I open the door.

The door looks like a door, open or closed. I open the door and it is quieter than breathing. Dad says get the hell out from the dark where I can't see his face.

When there are no rats, I am in my own bed. I can see a tree out the window and know which one it is. In the daytime I climb the tree and its bark is a peeling scrape on the inside of my arms when I let go to see what falling is like.

At night the tree is blacker than the sky behind it. It cannot fade into the sky because the sky is the blackest thing there is. I know the tree will never be anything but a tree. The sky could be anything. Who cares?

At night I count the tree. One tree. One tree. I pull the blankets up to my neck so nothing will not get me, and I listen to the inside of my ears. It sounds like roaring. It sounds like a tiger who is roaring in the jungle because the dishtowels will not let him up.

Behind my eyes there are things that look like branches but aren't because they are different every time.

She's gotta learn, she says in a voice like lipstick, and I hear it even though the covers are up and the doors are shut.

She's gotta learn to learn to learn. Everyone could tumble down the stairs at once. That could happen, us with ours parts mixed up at the bottom: tumble bumble bump.

The slugs would know me anyways.



*Flies are in the meadow  
the bees are in the park  
Miss Lucy and her boyfriend  
are kissing in the d-a-r-k, d-a-r-k  
DARK DARK DARK*

Once upon a time a little girl was a dirty little girl because she couldn't get clean. She didn't want to, so she ran instead. She could run fast. She could run fastest of anyone, even the wind, because she was a queen and she was mighty.

This little girl, who was really a queen but no one can tell without a crown, ran so fast that she went right off the edge of the world, schloomp, like that. Then she was falling and falling and falling but she didn't mind really because it was so black that no one could see her. She had a dirty face and dirty hands, and the insides of her elbows were dirty and so were the bottoms of her feet. She fit right in. She thought when she landed she would break into these tiny little pieces that no one would ever be able to put back together. She thought she would lie in a heap until the wind blew her crazy, all over the place, parts of her whirling in tiny tornadoes that caught up leaves and bark and grasshoppers and blew them around too. Sometimes, at night, someone would think about her, listen for her, not hear anything, and sigh. It wouldn't matter though. Even in pieces, she would still be queen. Even in pieces, she was still mighty. But she hadn't landed yet.

First she fell straight, like a metal rod, with her head the right way and her arms crossed over her chest. Then she fell sideways, rocking like feathers but faster. Then she got bored and fell like a sackful of mud. Finally, she pulled her legs up to her chest, locked her arms around them and got very quiet, very small. She fell like a ball or an orange. She fell like an acorn or a robin's egg. She fell like a snail shell with its snail inside—sealed, heavy, turning.







Notre goût pour raconter et pour écouter  
des histoires: Le vrai sujet  
de *Jacques le fataliste et son maître*  
par Denis Diderot



Michael C. Duck

Although Denis Diderot is known today primarily as the architect and principal writer of *L'Encyclopédie* during the French Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, that one work is hardly representative of the man. Professor Anne Chamayou and her class explored the multifaceted nature of his writing in a course entitled “Monsieur le Multiforme’: Diderot” in the spring semester of 2001 at the Arras campus of the Université d’Artois in France. The course focused on his personal letters to his mistress, Sophie Volland, and his “novel” *Jacques le fataliste et son maître*. The following manuscript, which was written for this course, takes *Jacques le fataliste* for its subject.


The manuscript is a kind of assignment known in France as a *dissertation*. The prompt for the assignment is a *citation* provided by the professor—usually a quotation from an unnamed secondary source. Rather than approaching the subject from whatever angle he or she wants, the student must write a paper that uses the logic established in the citation. The organization of the paper must strictly follow the same progression of ideas as within the citation, and the paper must also use all of the citation’s themes, including all of its key words.

The citation for this assignment (translated) is: "Rather than telling a story, Diderot shows [literally, 'puts on stage'], through the characters of Jacques le fataliste, our appetite for telling and for listening to stories."

This manuscript supports that statement. It begins by demonstrating how Jacques le fataliste rejects many generally accepted traits of a novel, including a novel's priority of telling a story. Through its use of multiple narrators, simultaneous plots, open-ended scenarios, and a gleefully omnipotent Narrator (who even engages in dialogue with the Reader), this "novel" clearly mocks the genre of the novel itself. Indeed, there are many moments when the "novel"—with its emphasis on dialogue and its periodic interruptions to describe the physical appearance of a scene—begins to look more like a play (note the citation's use of the expression "puts on stage"). The characters demonstrate an insatiable appetite—that starts with Jacques (a born talker) and his master (a born listener) and extending to virtually all characters in the work—for telling and listening to stories. Through the book, it becomes clear that its "plot" does not sustain the work's movement; these two complementary appetites fulfill that task instead. Without them, *Jacques le fataliste et son maître* could not exist.

All citations within the text of this manuscript refer to

Denis Diderot, *Jacques le fataliste et son maître*, ed. Yvon Belaval (Paris: Gallimard, 1973).

 a dissertation qui suit est une réponse à cette citation: « Au lieu de raconter une histoire, Diderot met en scène à travers les personnages de *Jacques le fataliste*, notre goût pour raconter et pour écouter des histoires. »

Il est évident que *Jacques le fataliste et son maître* par Denis Diderot n'est pas un roman typique. En fait, même le Lecteur se plaint au Romancier de ce fait, disant « Votre *Jacques* n'est qu'une insipide rapsodie de faits les uns réels, les autres imaginés, écrits sans grâce et distribués sans ordre. »<sup>1</sup> Au cours de cette « insipide rapsodie », il

devient clair que l'intrigue—c'est-à-dire, l'histoire des personnages—de *Jacques le fataliste et son maître* n'est pas le vrai sujet. Au lieu d'une intrigue, un autre concept prend la place au cœur de l'œuvre: notre goût pour raconter et pour écouter des histoires. En racontant et écoutant des histoires, les personnages eux-mêmes démontrent l'intensité de ce goût et sa qualité fondamentale dans le livre. Cette œuvre contient des éléments qui empêchent systématiquement de la classer comme roman; son véritable sujet porte sur notre goût pour raconter et pour écouter des histoires, démontré à travers les personnages de l'œuvre.

*Jacques le fataliste et son maître* refuse le concept du roman typique, en rejetant plusieurs éléments qui sont acceptés comme des traits essentiels du roman. Dans le roman typique voire traditionnel, le narrateur, soit un des personnages, soit un narrateur extérieur ou omniscient, raconte une histoire avec un début, un développement, et un dénouement qui sont distincts. Par opposition, *Jacques le fataliste* réfute chacun de ces éléments. Au lieu d'un seul narrateur, il y en a plusieurs: c'est le « Romancier » qui parle au lecteur, mais les autres personnages (Jacques surtout, mais aussi l'hôtesse du Grand-Cerf, le Marquis des Arcis, et le maître de Jacques) prennent également la parole à plusieurs reprises. Au lieu d'une seule histoire, il y en a plusieurs: l'œuvre a deux intrigues principales, l'histoire du voyage de Jacques et de son maître et aussi l'histoire des amours de Jacques, et de plus, ces deux histoires sont interrompues souvent par beaucoup d'autres: celles concernant Madame de la Pommeraye, Richard et le père Hudson, et les amours du maître de Jacques sont seulement trois exemples, et il y en a beaucoup d'autres. En plus, dans un roman typique, c'est au début que les protagonistes sont introduits et que le lieu principal de l'histoire est déterminé, tandis que ces informations ne sont pas données dans *Jacques le fataliste*: le maître n'est jamais nommé, et le nom familial de Jacques n'est pas donné non plus; ils voyagent en France, mais le lieu n'est jamais cité. Le Romancier dévoile seulement qu'ils viennent « Du lieu le plus prochain », et à la question « Où allaient-ils? », le Romancier répond « Est-ce que l'on sait où l'on va? »<sup>2</sup> En outre, il n'y a pas de vrai

dénouement non plus. Le voyage de Jacques et de son maître est interrompu lorsqu'ils s'arrêtent chez la nourrice qui, selon le maître, « n'est pas loin de l'endroit où nous allons. »<sup>3</sup> Quand ils arrivent, le maître tue le chevalier Saint-Ouin et fuit ; à ce même moment Jacques est saisi et emprisonné. Ensuite, le Romancier annonce « Et moi, je m'arrête, parce que je vous ai dit de ces deux personnages tout ce que j'en sais », <sup>4</sup> et il s'interrompt ainsi avant la fin du voyage et également avant la fin de l'histoire des amours de Jacques. En fait, l'« heureux dénouement » dans les pages suivantes est ajouté non pas par le Romancier mais par un « éditeur ». <sup>5</sup> Ainsi, *Jacques le fataliste* rejette d'une façon systématique beaucoup d'éléments essentiels du roman traditionnel.

En plus d'éviter tous ces éléments, le « Romancier » se moque des romans, déclarant que son récit n'est point un roman. Un bon exemple est le faux épisode de l'attaque des brigands, au moment où le Romancier dit au Lecteur « Vous allez croire que cette petite armée tombera sur Jacques et son maître, qu'il y aura une action sanglante. »<sup>6</sup> Il continue, « Il est bien évident que je ne fais pas un roman, puisque je néglige ce qu'un romancier ne manquerait pas d'employer », et puis il explique que ce qu'il raconte ressemble plus à « la vérité » qu'à « une fable ». <sup>7</sup> L'implication est que les romanciers font une erreur lorsqu'ils préfèrent raconter une histoire divertissante plutôt que de dire la vérité. Ce phénomène se répète à la page 278, lorsque le Romancier interrompt le maître, qui est prêt à continuer l'histoire de ses amours, pour admettre qu'il est « tenté de...fermer la bouche » du maître et d'introduire un autre personnage sur scène, soit « un vieux militaire sur son cheval...ou une jeune paysanne », qui aurait pu être un des personnages déjà mentionnés dans une des histoires de Jacques. Le Romancier dit « Un faiseur de roman n'y manquerait pas ; mais je n'aime pas les romans.... Je fais l'histoire... ». <sup>8</sup> C'est-à-dire, un vrai romancier n'aurait pas manqué cette opportunité pour une telle coïncidence, mais la vérité est la priorité pour ce Romancier. Néanmoins, un peu plus tard, il se vante de son pouvoir omnipotent sur son histoire, en disant que, si le lecteur n'a assisté ni aux obsèques

ni à l'enterrement du père Hudson (un personnage dans l'histoire du marquis des Arcis), « il est donc mort ou vivant, comme il me plaira. »<sup>9</sup> Dans ce cas, opposé à sa critique des romanciers, la « vérité » de l'histoire dépend d'un coup de tête du Romancier. Il joue également avec la « vérité » de l'histoire lorsque le Romancier donne plusieurs possibilités au Lecteur et le laisse choisir laquelle lui convient le mieux (les sept possibilités pour la deuxième nuit du voyage, et si Jacques dort sur des chaises ou sur le carreau pendant la sixième nuit).<sup>10</sup> Le Romancier joue également avec son pouvoir même dans les premiers paragraphes de l'œuvre, au moment où il dit « Vous voyez, lecteur, ... qu'il ne tiendrait qu'à moi de vous faire attendre un an, deux ans, trois ans, le récit des amours de Jacques. ... Qu'il est facile de faire des contes! »<sup>11</sup> Dans ces cas aussi, le Romancier se moque des romanciers, ici par excès et parodie, en ridiculisant les auteurs qui abusent de leur pouvoir omnipotent sur leurs histoires, surtout pour donner au lecteur précisément ce qu'il veut lire au lieu de lui donner la vérité. En tout cas, il est clair que le Romancier ridiculise les romans, et qu'il insiste sur le fait que son récit n'est pas un vrai roman.

Au lieu des caractéristiques d'un roman, *Jacques le fataliste et son maître* montre souvent les traits d'une « mise en scène »—une comédie. L'œuvre ne commence pas avec l'exposition, mais avec un dialogue entre le Lecteur et le Romancier, puis un autre entre Jacques et son maître. En fait, ce motif de dialogue se répète presque à chaque page du livre, parce que un des personnages (soit le Romancier, le Lecteur, Jacques, son maître, ou un autre) est toujours en train de parler. Même l'aspect visuel du livre ressemble à un texte de comédie, avec les noms à gauche de la page identifiant le personnage qui parle. De plus, le Romancier interrompt assez souvent les autres personnages pour donner des descriptions visuelles qui ressemblent aux didascalies. On trouve un exemple à la page cinquante-neuf, où l'on voit le pantomime du maître en attendant Jacques: « L'automate allait devant lui, se retournant de temps en temps pour voir si Jacques ne revenait pas; il descendait de cheval et marchait à pied; il remontait sur sa bête, faisait un quart de lieue, redescendait et s'asseyait à terre, la

bride de son cheval passée dans ses bras, et la tête appuyée sur ses deux mains. » À la page 169, le Romancier coupe brutalement la parole de l'hôtesse pour dire « Lecteur, j'avais oublié de vous peindre le site des trois personnages dont il s'agit ici.... [V]ous les avez entendus parler, mais vous ne les avez point vus... », et il commence à donner une description de l'endroit où chaque personnage se trouve dans la chambre; c'est une description qui n'a aucune signification ni pour le récit de l'hôtesse ni pour celui de Jacques et de son maître, mais qui donne un aspect visuel ou dramatique à cette scène. Grâce à tous ces éléments, *Jacques le fataliste et son maître* commence à ressembler à une comédie, par opposition à la conception traditionnelle du roman.

Dans *Jacques le fataliste*, une intrigue est remplacée par notre goût pour raconter et pour écouter des histoires; cela se manifeste à travers les personnages, et celui qui incarne ce goût est sans doute Jacques lui-même. La première action décrite par le Romancier est faite par Jacques, lorsqu'il commence à parler à son maître. Ainsi, le début du mouvement de l'œuvre entière dépend de Jacques commençant à parler. C'est son goût pour raconter qui soutient l'action de la plupart de l'œuvre et qui maintient ensemble tous les fragments qui la constituent. L'œuvre dépend du fait que Jacques parle, et cela est démontré clairement au moment où Jacques quitte son maître pour chercher sa bourse de voyage et la montre de son maître: le Romancier fait observer que l'histoire du maître sans Jacques et ses histoires est très ennuyeuse.<sup>12</sup> Il est alors évident que, sans le goût de Jacques pour raconter des histoires, il n'y a pas de *Jacques le fataliste et son maître*. En fait, il semble que Jacques lui-même n'existe pas non plus sans ce goût, car celui-ci a même un aspect instinctif ou inné: à la page 206, Jacques admet « Je suis né bavard. » Et comme c'est le cas dans l'œuvre entière, l'acte de raconter des histoires est beaucoup plus important pour Jacques que l'histoire elle-même. Le maître de Jacques lui fait observer « Tu aimes mieux parler mal que te taire »; ainsi ce que Jacques dit est moins important que le fait qu'il parle.<sup>13</sup> D'une façon



similaire, l'histoire de *Jacques le fataliste* est moins importante que l'acte de raconter une histoire, peu importe son sujet.

Mais Jacques n'est pas le seul « bavard » dans l'œuvre: l'hôtesse du Grand-Cerf, le Marquis des Arcis, et le maître de Jacques démontrent également un goût pour raconter des histoires, un goût qui se rattache au nôtre. Le Romancier fait remarquer que la « passion dominante » de l'hôtesse « était celle de parler »,<sup>14</sup> et lorsqu'elle trouve que le maître de Jacques veut écouter ses histoires, elle prend la place du raconteur, au grand malheur de Jacques. Ce motif se répète avec le marquis des Arcis, même si son amour pour raconter des histoires ne semble pas être une passion aussi dévorante que celles de Jacques et de l'hôtesse. Quand même, il est également heureux de trouver le maître de Jacques pour l'écouter, et il lui propose « Si vous n'avez rien qui vous occupe plus utilement ou plus agréablement, je vous raconterai l'histoire de mon secrétaire... »<sup>15</sup> Le maître lui-même aussi joue le rôle du narrateur au moment où Jacques ne peut plus parler à cause de son mal de gorge. Il est évident que le goût de Jacques pour raconter des histoires n'est pas une anomalie; tous ces personnages partagent ce goût. Si l'amour de Jacques pour raconter des histoires met les choses en route, c'est l'amour de raconter de ces autres personnages qui soutient le récit au milieu et vers la fin de l'œuvre. Cette abondance de personnages suggère que tout le monde a ce goût pour raconter des histoires, même si tous ne sont pas « nés bavards » comme Jacques ou s'ils semblent assez ennuyeux lorsqu'ils sont seuls, comme le maître. Ces personnages et leurs contes représentent notre goût pour raconter des histoires, et c'est ce goût qui est au cœur de l'œuvre au lieu d'une intrigue.

Mais notre goût pour raconter des histoires n'est pas tout seul dans le cœur de l'œuvre; il est accompagné par son complément, c'est-à-dire notre goût pour les écouter, et ce deuxième est également démontré à travers les personnages. Si Jacques lui-même représente notre goût pour raconter, son maître assurément est la personnification de notre goût pour écouter. Même Jacques utilise ce terme en disant

à son maître « Vous avez un furieux goût pour les contes! », <sup>16</sup> une observation que le maître ne peut réfuter. Il y a un parallélisme entre le rôle de Jacques et celui de son maître, puisque, selon les mots du maître, Jacques aime « mieux parler mal que [se] taire » et le maître « aime mieux entendre mal parler que de ne rien entendre ». <sup>17</sup> Ainsi pour le maître (comme dans l'œuvre entière), l'acte d'écouter est plus important que ce qu'on écoute; voilà encore l'intrigue supprimée du cœur de l'œuvre. En fait, le goût du maître pour écouter est aussi important que celui de Jacques pour raconter, parce que son goût pour écouter est également nécessaire pour soutenir le mouvement du récit. Si le maître de Jacques était comme ses anciens maîtres (c'est-à-dire, s'il voulait que Jacques se taise), Jacques n'aurait jamais commencé son histoire, et *Jacques le fataliste* n'existerait pas. Les mots du maître, « Eh bien! Jacques, l'histoire de tes amours? », deviennent une sorte de refrain, puisque le maître encourage Jacques à continuer son histoire et ainsi la suite de l'œuvre. Néanmoins, le goût du maître n'est pas d'écouter une seule histoire mais d'écouter des histoires en général, et il permet alors plusieurs interruptions dans l'histoire des amours de Jacques: non seulement lorsque Jacques s'interrompt pour raconter une autre histoire mais également lorsque des autres personnages prennent la place du raconteur. Au moment où Jacques ne peut plus parler, le maître commence à parler lui-même, et la conséquence ici est que (pour paraphraser) le maître aime mieux entendre son propre conte que de ne rien entendre. Comme dans le cas de Jacques, et dans celui de l'œuvre entière, l'histoire elle-même n'est pas importante. En fait, même l'identité du raconteur n'est pas importante. L'acte d'écouter est l'élément essentiel.

Mais le personnage qui manifeste de façon plus frappante notre goût pour écouter des histoires est le Lecteur. Un lecteur de *Jacques le fataliste* devient une sorte de personnage dans l'œuvre, lorsque le Romancier lui parle directement et l'auteur donne plusieurs lignes au Lecteur dans son dialogue avec le Romancier. Néanmoins, il semble que dans les moments où le Romancier s'adresse au Lecteur, il s'adresse aux véritables lecteurs de *Jacques le fataliste*, et lorsqu'on le lit, on



joue le rôle du Lecteur. Dans ce contexte, le Romancier parle directement à notre goût pour écouter des histoires. Ce goût du Lecteur est aussi insatiable que celui du maître de Jacques, le Lecteur demandant régulièrement « Et les amours de Jacques ? » au moment où le Romancier interrompt délibérément l'histoire des amours de Jacques. En réponse, le Romancier fait observer l'aspect vorace du Lecteur, en disant « toujours des contes d'amour[!] Il est vrai... que, puisqu'on écrit pour vous, il faut ou se passer de votre applaudissement, ou vous servir à votre goût, et que vous l'avez bien décidé pour les contes d'amour. »<sup>18</sup> Mais en fait le Lecteur démontre un « furieux goût » comme le maître, non seulement pour les contes d'amour, mais pour les histoires en général. À la page soixante-douze, il interrompt l'histoire du voyage de Jacques et de son maître et mentionne brièvement « un certain poète que j'envoyai à Pondichéry », et ensuite le Lecteur insiste pour qu'il raconte l'histoire de ce poète avant de continuer avec l'histoire de Jacques et de son maître, même si l'histoire du poète n'a rien à voir avec la suite de l'histoire de Jacques et de son maître. Evidemment, comme celui du maître de Jacques, le goût du Lecteur ne fait pas de distinction entre les différentes histoires, et l'acte d'écouter est plus important que le sujet de l'histoire. De plus, ce goût du Lecteur est même plus important que celui du maître pour l'existence de l'œuvre, parce que le Romancier ne peut rien dire si le Lecteur ne l'écoute pas. Dans tous les cas, notre goût pour écouter des histoires est représenté par celui du Lecteur, et il est clair que ce goût se trouve au cœur de l'œuvre, remplaçant une seule histoire ou une intrigue.

Avec tous ces traits peu conventionnels, *Jacques le fataliste et son maître* est bien sûr une œuvre complexe. Il ne peut pas être classé comme roman typique, à cause de son début vague, sa multitude de narrateurs, ses deux intrigues principales qui sont interrompues si souvent, et son dénouement étrange; de plus, l'œuvre se moque des romans de façon explicite. Mais au lieu de simplement raconter une histoire, l'auteur utilise son œuvre pour aborder le concept de raconter et d'écouter des histoires. Dans cette conception, *Jacques le fataliste*

prend des traits de la comédie pour mettre en scène au travers des personnages nos goûts complémentaires pour raconter et pour écouter des histoires. Jacques, bavard depuis sa naissance, montre l'intensité de notre goût pour raconter des histoires sur n'importe quel sujet; et le nombre des autres personnages qui racontent des histoires (l'hôtesse, le marquis des Arcis, et même le maître de Jacques) montre que ce goût est presque universel. Par opposition, le maître, avec son « furieux goût pour les contes », montre la force de notre goût pour écouter des histoires, encore une fois sans tenir compte du sujet; et le Romancier (et l'auteur) remarque ce goût dans le personnage du Lecteur, qui est la personnification des véritables lecteurs du roman. Ce sont ces deux goûts complémentaires et non pas une intrigue ou une seule histoire qui soutiennent le mouvement de l'œuvre. Sans notre goût pour raconter et pour écouter des histoires, *Jacques le fataliste et son maître* ne peut pas exister.



Notes

1. Denis Diderot, *Jacques le fataliste et son maître*, ed. Yvon Belaval (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), 261.
2. Ibid., 35.
3. Ibid., 315–316.
4. Ibid., 325.
5. Ibid., 326.
6. Ibid., 46–47.
7. Ibid., 47.
8. Ibid., 278.
9. Ibid., 278.
10. Ibid., 57–58, 201.
11. Ibid., 36–37.
12. Ibid., 59–60.
13. Ibid., 197.
14. Ibid., 143.
15. Ibid., 216.
16. Ibid., 197.
17. Ibid., 197.
18. Ibid., 219.

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## Ode to What Is Missed

Maybe it's the way currencies change color.  
Or the way green emanates red.  
Maybe there's no Christmas anyway.

But at the base of this tree,  
This old oak body,  
I have soles marked with the brown of trains.

Each place I have gone looks silver to me.  
My eyes are blinded by that,  
By the December star left dangling in the night.

Life is a shack withering in the rain,  
Until it snows and igloos become harbors  
Of dreams where all the ornaments of the past are buried.

Everything is indistinguishable and silent here,  
Like deer in the face of the brush,  
Whose whispers sing "It is us it is us."

*by Max Orsini*



# Violence & Prosperity A Tragedicomedie in Pieces



*John Fitzpatrick Killeen*  
*Author of the Critically-wounded Faux Pas*  
*"The Ghastly Section 4 of Hans Morgenthau's*  
*Politics among Nations"*  
*And also the love story*  
*"Chilean poetry of the 1970s,"*  
*for which the Author received an A-*

## ACT I

*Scene i, in which the Chorus sets the scene, shooting from the hip...*

Good evening.

This is a paper about what prosperity is.

And what it is not.

Imagine that I have something you do not.

It is a golden calf lapel pin.

I am thus prosperous.

You kill me and take it away.

Perhaps you sell it.  
I am not prosperous anymore.  
You are now prosperous.

*Scene ii, in which you become less prosperous all the time; the notion of prosperity gets confused...*

You killed me and sold  
My golden calf lapel pin.  
When you sold it, the merchant  
That bought it from you  
Gave you a bad deal—  
Half the calf's worth.  
He became more prosperous  
You became less so.

*Scene ii, part b*

But, having sold the lapel  
Pin at half its worth,  
You were still more  
Prosperous than previously  
And certainly more prosperous than I,  
Who am no longer prosperous being dead.  
And having bought the pin,  
The merchant is more  
Prosperous too.  
He will sell it at 150%  
Of its actual value—  
Becoming most prosperous.



You split your earnings  
And send half home,  
Making your folks  
More prosperous still than I,  
Who am at that point  
Still very much dead.

*Scene ii, part c*

Instead of sending the earnings  
From the sold lapel pin home,  
You kept it at the last minute.  
You invested half the money  
In a maquiladora and  
With the other half  
Bought a gun,  
Increasing by far  
Your potential prosperity.  
You used your gun  
To become kinetically  
Prosperous once more.  
And the maquiladora be—  
Came prosperous in the meantime...

It must be noted here that the “protagonist” of “Violence and Prosperity” evidenced, in part b of Section ii, a sustainable and non-hegemonic role. By balancing the proceeds of his work (the violent murder of me) between his folks back home in the countryside and his own pocket, he is engaging in a positive socialist alternative to liberal or neoliberal development.<sup>1</sup> However, in part c of the very same section, the protagonist delves headlong into those very modes

of development which neglect the rural development of his folks for the increased "prosperity" of the city. The further growth of the assembly plant will mean new jobs and increased output, but his folks in the country have been forced to mortgage the goat farm to cover payments. This will certainly drive the folks, eventually, into the city to work in that very assembly plant.<sup>2</sup>



# ACT II

*Scene i: Can I call you Prosperous?*

I, who have, been manufacturing  
Golden fishes for many years,  
Am appalled at your living conditions.  
I first realized my sympathies  
For you and my desire to help  
When you refused  
To buy my fishes.  
And then I offered them  
To you in trade for  
The women of your village,  
Who would have been  
Very helpful laborers  
And at low cost to me.

*Scene i, part b*

What sort of humanity  
Values not a Golden Fish?

*Scene ii, in which my values are superimposed on yours...*

Because you are uncivil,  
I began showing you how  
To manufacture these very  
Little fishes.  
You learned very quickly,  
And I was affirmed that  
Even in such beasts there lurks  
Some gaseous quark  
Of humanity...

Here, we must take exception to the flowery, if adequately cruel, language of the author. It is certain that he takes liberties in this, even as much of the remainder of his speech is precise and unpretentious.

In addition, we must note how it is seemingly within reason to expect a “beast” from the rural, kin-based society to be interested in a gew-gaw like a gold fish. This ignores the needs and modes of obtaining those needs that prevailed among “undeveloped” people. The just approach, according to Arturo Escobar, would be different. Such an approach “must reverse the [here quoting Maurice Godelier] spontaneous impulse to look in every society for economic institutions and relations separate from other social relations, comparable to those of Western capitalist society.”<sup>3</sup>

With the appropriation of the savage laborer, the protagonist has incorporated that Other into the economic mode prevalent in civilized circles. To the savage it may be—indeed is—entirely irrelevant; but to the protagonist, there is only beneficence in this act, not only because the savage thus enters a context which makes sense to the Westerner, but because he can also thereby gain from his low-cost, if not cost-free, labor.

The dilemma thus becomes manifest. The protagonist fails to see the mode of production already functioning in the underdeveloped society.



ACT III

*Scene i, in which the savage speaks of not being savage...*

The maquiladora shut down  
When the sports shoe market dropped  
Because all the American children  
Didn't like the way you employed me.  
And then the labor law passed,  
And I could not be hired.  
I wonder what would have happened  
To me before...

They say the Westerners  
Have lost money in the plants.  
I cannot sell a goat today,  
But I have milk, and I have  
Meat.  
My house belongs to my family  
and...

Instead I am in the street  
Picking scraps.  
There is no money  
Anymore,  
And I don't own  
Anything.

The intrusion into the sequence of the verses, ostensibly by one or another of the savages, marks a coup in the verses, which are otherwise in the civil voice. And in its brief passage, this voice reminds

us of what the protagonist had referred to as the “gaseous quark,”<sup>4</sup> the living vibrancy that separates him, the former savage, from the commodities he had been manufacturing. Thus the true protagonist is brought to the fore, while early on he had been lying dormant beneath the contempt of the colonial developer. The protagonist testifies wearily that the assembly plant is shut down because of consumer protests of labor conditions. The irony is, without a doubt, quite obtuse in his perspective; “American children” didn’t approve of the way (presumably) American adults abused third world labor, resulting in an even more dire circumstance, further digression into squalor. And now that the protagonist is functioning within a transformed capital-driven society, he is unable to rely on kinship security measures. While it is certain to Western critics such as ourselves that kinship societies faced potential famine and drought,<sup>5</sup> the protagonist daydreams of again being outside the economic transformation, able to milk a goat or else slaughter it and survive. The harsh reality, however, cannot be evaded. In the new order of things, his survival is contingent upon his ability to either sell himself as a labor commodity or sell the tin, paper and what-not he scavenges in the streets.<sup>6</sup> Undoubtedly, on slow days, our protagonist eats from the streets, too, if there is substance to be eaten.



In the final Act of the work, under the heading “Let’s all eat cake and act quizzical...,” three simultaneous voices confront the reader with hypothetical scenarios. Each, within the ideological and emotional context proffered by the alternating speakers, elaborates the destiny of he who we now know is the true protagonist.

...I gave you a job  
Lifting packing crates  
At the harbor.

You were happy  
To once more evade  
The night sweep of  
Police...

...[he] scratches the walls  
and only there is blood  
no food.  
There is a child  
in the bedroom  
with a man...

...You organized to petition  
The government and demand  
Fair reward: something like  
Sustenance.  
Something like  
Survival...

...When you returned  
Home with your pay  
You sent half home  
To your folks  
Who have a goat farm...

...[he] does not send the letter.  
The gun feels large in his hands.  
The child is in the bedroom  
with a man...

...after the protests, they loved you  
And you ran for public office.  
You promised reform  
And to fight Congress  
And to spit in the hand  
Of the West...

...You pushed the door open  
And I saw your weeping  
From where I lay  
With your child.  
You raised your hands slowly...

...[his] body shook so violently  
he could shatter any moment  
and so quickly fired  
there were pounding sounds,  
and the child cried again  
but worse...

...When you were elected,  
The military swarmed into  
The plaza.



Notes

1. Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 99.
2. Robert H. Bates, *Prosperity and Violence: The Political Economy of Development* (New York: Norton and Co., 2001), 32.
3. Escobar, 61.
4. Admittedly, a vulgar phrasing of what is "human." George Clinton is sure to nod in approval since, indeed, we do all come from the funk.
5. Bates, 38.
6. DeJesus, Carolina Maria. *Child of the Dark* (New York: Putnam, 1962).

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# Emerging Barbershop Culture in the Twenty-first Century



*Paula Persoleo*

## INITIAL RESPONSES

Immediately I recognized that things were different, as I struggled to find a parking spot in the tiny lot hidden just off of the highway. The barbershop is located in an area too small to be considered a strip mall—and apparently too small to handle all of its customers' vehicles. It is the third in a row of three shops, although the first, a former ice cream/water ice business, was for rent. I knew that all of the drivers of the automobiles in the lot were in the barber-shop, as the repair shop next to it does not open until 9 A.M. Apparently all Saturday mornings here begin with such a full parking lot. Once I found a parking spot, I was ready to begin my first session of ethnographic observation for my Doing Anthropology course.

I walked into U.S. Male tentatively, looking for a corner seat. Air coming through the open door chilled the shop's interior, which was teeming with customers just fifteen minutes after the shop had opened. The stares from those already seated in the shop's green plastic chairs along the right wall, as well as from those getting haircuts in the four

leather chairs to my left, pierced me as I wandered over to one of the vacant seats. There were only two available, so I was stuck between a chair seating *Outdoor* magazine and another holding a man in his forties who was reading *The News Journal* and sipping a rapidly cooling cup of coffee.

There were ten customers in all, and they all seemed ready for a wait as many came prepared with equipment similar to that brought by the gentleman on my left. I was surprised by the lack of conversation amid the fairly large crowd, although I attributed this to it being too early in the morning to engage in any sort of meaningful conversation. Two of the barbers were talking with their customers about the attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001—just four days before this initial visit, but the other two said nothing as they worked. A tiny television with a screen approximately six inches high, located in the middle of the four barbers' stations, was displaying CNN, but the sound was turned down. When the razors stopped buzzing, the classic rock radio station seemed to blare through the quiet. Despite the open door, the air conditioner was moaning softly in the background.

I took this opportunity to examine my surroundings. To the right of the opened front door was a gumball machine and a green leafy plant. The counter in front of the door seemed to have no immediate purpose, except to hold another leafy plant and some additional magazines that were strewn about it. Above the chairs where I was sitting was a mirror, which I presume is used by the nervous customer who wants to keep an eye on the way in which the barber cuts his hair. Another wall sectioned off an area from the four barbers' stations, which I knew to be the owner's workspace. His station basically was set up as were the others, but he had more room in which to work. There was one sink on the opposite side of his wall for use in case a customer wanted a "premium cut," which includes a shampoo and conditioning wash or a color treatment. In the corner, between the sink and the fourth barber's station, was the ATM, conveniently located next to the cash register. This is practical because the barbershop only accepts cash for payment.

Opposite the plastic chairs were the four barbers' stations. All

were similarly constructed with large mirrors, long fluorescent lights, and enough counter space to shelve various hair-cutting products, including Clorox wipes, water bottles, hair spray, gel, brushes, combs soaking in Barbicide, a shaving brush, scissors, and razor attachments of various sizes. The razor itself was attached to the right corner of the counter, and its long blue tube, which collected the newly cut hair, was connected to the bottom right side of the counter. The diplomas for each barber hung to the right of their stations, while smaller, portable mirrors hung below them. A booster seat rested against the left side of each station. American flags were recently hung at the top right corner of the fluorescent lights. Somehow, this setting reminded me more of a hair salon than it did a barbershop.

This shop is set up for efficient business. It and the adjacent parking lot are small, but there is enough room to keep the shop filled for four barbers on their busiest days. All of the barbers have exactly what they need at their disposal. If they run out of any products, the brand names of which varied from barber to barber, then the cabinets below their counters have a replacement. The owner's area generally is used as a break area because the owner is employed elsewhere during most days. This is a convenience because a barber can cut short his break if the shop fills with people, but he also can conceal himself in the back so the store does not look inefficient by employing more people than necessary.

The barbershop is set up to be efficient for its customers as well. There are four barbers available all day, everyday, and five if the owner is there. The customer is assured of waiting no longer than twenty to thirty minutes, even on a busy Saturday morning. There is no need for a barber to tell the next customer to sit down: that customer is seated before the barber returns from his last transaction. Customers watch each other so they know who is next to be served. They make known the barber for whom they are waiting by either sitting directly behind that barber or by announcing their preference to incoming customers.

The customers in the shop that morning all had a similar appearance. Each looked to be in his late-thirties or mid-forties, dressed either in khakis or jeans, and all wore button-down shirts. Those

who did not bring coffee or a newspaper flipped through the magazines that were scattered throughout the shop. Many of the customers were waiting for the same barber to cut their hair, which accounted for the unusually long amount of time they had been sitting in the plastic chairs. After further visits, I realized that older men tended to go in the morning or early afternoon on weekdays, while young men tended to go after 4:00 on weekdays or throughout the day on Saturdays. Women who took their sons to the barber tended to go on weekday evenings or Saturdays throughout the day. Little girls who went with either their fathers or their mothers tended to follow this same pattern. That morning, then, the men in the shop were on schedule. The only other time that men of their age come into the shop is during the typical lunchtime, between 11:30 A.M. and 2 P.M.

I looked up from my notebook after scribbling ferociously, and I realized that no one was looking at me anymore. In fact, it seemed as though the customers were going out of their way to avoid looking at me. I then realized just how excluded I was from this group of males sitting around me. Throughout the shop were outright signs of masculinity: the radio station was broadcasting commercials with men saying, "Are you getting any?" and women moaning in the background; the magazines surrounding me were targeted at men; the only plants present were without flowers; and most obviously, there were no other women around. There was not the slightest possibility of my blending in, either, because unlike all of the other customers, I had medium-length hair, I wore a bright orange shirt, and I was unfamiliar with the processes that went on in the shop. Even if the barbers, who knew I would stop in periodically, did not care that I was around, I felt the urge to leave as the customers seemed uncomfortable in my presence. I decided that I had gathered all the information that I could handle for that day, so I closed my notebook, picked up my purse, and left the shop.

As I left, I noticed things that I had overlooked when I arrived earlier that morning, including the "Barber Pole," the distinctive marker of a barbershop. I had anticipated a tall pole, approximately

six feet high, with the swirling red, white, and blue bands staring at me as I approached the door; instead, the “pole” was the size of a lighting fixture mounted near the high left corner of the entrance to the shop. On the spinning blue band in white letters was written “Hairstylist,” rather than what I thought was the more appropriate title, “Barber,” since schools that train hairstylists are different from the schools that train barbers.

I also noticed signs on the outside of the building, as well as on the billboard near the highway, which emphasized “Fast-Service” and “Fast Walk-in Service.” These signs also showed subtle indications of the male-ness of this shop. The “L” in the word “Male” on the billboard facing the highway had the barber pole drawn into it to stress that “U.S. Male Men’s Hair Care Center,” as it is advertised in the phone book, was in fact a barbershop. I smirked when I noticed this, and I surmised that this was done to prove to men that this was not a salon. Salons are for women, of course.

#### DEBUNKING ASSUMPTIONS

I always have had the notion of a barbershop as an intimate gathering place where men go not only to get a haircut, but also to gossip. When I was a child, my father took my brother and me with him to the barbershop. We sat on wooden chairs around a small coffee table in the tiny waiting area, which provided us with a newspaper missing sections and two or three magazines, just enough to kill the time my dad spent with the barber. My dad waited with us for about twenty minutes until one of the two barbers who worked there was ready, then casually walked to the opened chair and had a lengthy, informal conversation with that barber.

During my first visit to U.S. Male, I began to realize that much had changed since my tag-along visits to the barbershop with my dad. The intimacy is gone—the waiting room area has been elongated and shoved against the wall opposite of the cutting area. Efficiency and convenience, not camaraderie and conversation, increas-

ingly are becoming the norms. Lengthy conversations are now a burden to the fast-paced professional, who has time only for the “quick trim.” In fact, the barbers themselves do not go out of their way to begin a conversation or even to ask the customer what type of cut he wants. Rather, immediately following the previous cash transaction, they call out, “Next,” so that the next waiting customer will be in the seat and ready for the barber once he gets back from the register.

In addition to those differences, I could not help but recognize the masculine overtones that surrounded me during that first visit. I wanted to concentrate all of my energies on how the barbershop had changed from a slow-paced, friendly environment into the fast-paced session of consumer reality that it had become—but with each repeated visit I realized that I had to address the issue of masculinity in the barbershop because the evidence of its presence screamed at me.

Especially during that first visit to U.S. Male, I felt the oppressive weight of the “male gaze,” a term which I thought applied only to characters in movies. The theory is that female characters in movies are framed according to the desired “male gaze” that the shot demands. Perhaps as a child my presence in a barbershop was accepted because I was there waiting for my father, as I was too young to be left home alone. Or perhaps I simply was too young to notice anyone who would have been staring at me. But every time I walked into U.S. Male, I knew that I was out of place, and the stares I received from the customers emphasized this. My hunch was confirmed when I interviewed Gary White, the barber who occupied the first station.<sup>1</sup> I asked him if he thought that women who came into the barbershop seemed comfortable being there, and he answered that “when a woman comes into a barbershop, she knows that...it would be like...a professional woman walking in town by the, uh, construction site. All the guys are gonna look at her, you know? Probably, we all, you know, we look at the women that come in here, but were not... disrespectful to 'em.” Later in the conversation, he again emphasized, “Any woman that comes in here, all eyes are gonna be on the woman, you know?”

Yes, I do, which is why I could not keep from thinking about this



issue. In U.S. Male, the gaze appeared each time I walked in, questioning me, suspicious of why I was there, and then it disappeared so that, theoretically, I might, too. This was a regular pattern, repeated each time I went in (with one exception that I will mention later). The emerging barbershop culture, it seems, is adopting an economic efficiency paralleled with an *über*-masculinity, and both are over-emphasized to ensure that the message can be read clearly.

#### BARBERS, HISTORICALLY SPEAKING

The word barber is derived from the Latin word *barba*, meaning beard.<sup>2</sup> As a profession, barbering was introduced in Rome in 296 B.C. The barbers of the early days were also surgeons and dentists, and in both Egypt and Greece, barbers attained prosperity and respect. Statesmen, poets, and philosophers who came to have their hair cut or their beards trimmed frequented the shops. They also came to discuss the news of the day because the barbershops of the ancient world were the headquarters of social, political, and sporting news.

Barbers also performed other services, having been enlisted in later years to assist the clergy in their medicinal practice of blood letting. At the Council of Tours in 1163, the clergy were forbidden to draw blood or to act as physicians or surgeons. Barbers then took up these duties, partly because they were the natural successors of the clergy, but also because physicians of that time disdained surgery. The origin of the barber's pole appears to be associated with this service of bloodletting. The original pole has at its top a brass basin that represents both the vessel in which leeches were kept and the basin that received the blood. The pole itself represents the staff that the patient held onto during the operation. The red and white stripes symbolize the bandages used during the procedure: red for the bandages stained with blood during the operation and white for the clean bandages. After washing, the bandages were hung out to dry on the pole, blowing and twisting together to form the spiral pattern seen on the modern day barber pole.

The bloodstained bandages became recognized as the emblem of the barber-surgeon profession. Later, the emblem was replaced by a wooden pole of white and red stripes. These colors are recognized as the true colors of the barber emblem. Red, white, and blue typically are displayed in America, partly due to the fact that the national flag has these colors. Another interpretation of these barber pole colors is that the red represents arterial blood, the blue is symbolic of venous blood, and the white depicts the bandage. After the formation of the United Barber Surgeons Company in England, a statute required barbers to use a blue and white pole and surgeons to use a red pole.

The connection between barbering and surgery continued for more than six centuries, and the barber profession reached its pinnacle during this time. Until 1461, barbers were the only persons practicing surgery. After this time, new discoveries were being made regularly and barbers found it impossible to keep up while maintaining their skill in dentistry and barbering. By an act of Parliament in 1745, the alliance between the barbers and the surgeons was dissolved. Two separate companies were formed and the property formerly owned jointly by the barbers and the surgeons was divided. The profession lost its ancient dignity and, by the nineteenth century, barbers had become laborers instead of professionals. Barbershops became hangouts, places where low characters assembled. Smutty stories, malicious scandal, and gossip of all kinds characterized barbershops. A barbershop was a place where men showed their lower instincts and women dared not enter.

#### COMMENTARY ON THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Although I knew something of this ancient barber-surgeon profession when I began my study, it was difficult for me to imagine Gary letting blood from a sick man or dissecting bodies of hanged criminals. The profession continues to change; however, similarities between modern barbering and some of the other older traditions remain. I remember when barbers engaged in lengthy conversations with their customers, not because it was convenient or because it



killed the slow time, but for the pleasure of speaking with another person. Likewise, in ancient Greece, men engaged in meaningful conversation with each other. I will allow that the quiet conversations being held on September 15 were reminiscent of ancient ones—social, political, and sporting news were prominent conversation topics—but Gary, the most talkative of all of the barbers in U.S. Male, suggested in my interview with him that most prevalent were conversations about smut, scandal, and gossip.

The dignity of the barbershop may still be in question, but the popularity of barbershops is easy to recognize. In New Castle County, Delaware, there are forty-one shops with the word “barber” in their titles. There are nine shops that suggest, either implicitly or explicitly, that they are in fact barbershops although “barber” is not stated directly in their titles. There are forty-two additional salons or hair design businesses that also are listed under the heading “Barbers” in the phone book. Whether because of the overt femaleness of the salon environment or the camaraderie men find in a barbershop, there are proportionately more barbershops than salons.

Gary had his own reasons for becoming a barber after working in an upscale salon. I wondered if Gary changed jobs because there was a greater payoff for him as a barber. About the monetary differential he said that “you could be doing a perm, a color, and a highlight, you know, which will take you a couple hours, or you could bang out eight haircuts, you know, in a couple hours.” This suggests that the pay from barbering is at least complementary to that in a salon. For my haircuts I go to the same place Gary used to work, and I pay fifty dollars plus a tip each time I get a haircut. When one compares a man getting a regular haircut every six to eight weeks at twelve dollars a cut to my spending fifty dollars three times a year, the exchange is fairly even.

As the only specifically listed “barbershop” in Hockessin, U.S. Male, despite its diminutive size, has captured the business of a large proportion of the town’s male population. It also generates a large revenue, as it charges twelve dollars for the typical haircut for both

men and young boys. This seems to be a bit excessive since a man's haircut can take as little as five minutes or, for a perfectionist barber, at most twenty minutes. This pricing is viable, though, since U.S. Male is the only "Men's Hair Care Center" in the area. Men's haircuts in salons generally cost significantly less than women's haircuts, but they still cost more than a typical barbers shop would charge. The salon closest to U.S. Male, only a half of a mile away, charges fourteen dollars for a man's haircut. For a man who is comforted by the presence of mostly men, or feels overwhelmed by the presence of mostly women, the two-dollar price difference is a sufficient excuse for his driving the extra half-mile for a "quick trim" from U.S. Male.

So if there is little difference between the amount of money Gary made at the salon and the amount he makes as a barber, then the reason for this occupational change must be due to the environmental differences between the salon and the barbershop. When I asked him directly why he chose to work in a barbershop instead, Gary said, "It's a lot easier dealing with men than with women." Despite some pressing, I could not get him to elaborate much on his response; I have a feeling, however, that the overt femaleness of the salon environment had influenced his decision. Gary's conversations with his male customers at the barbershop tend to focus on "sports, sex, cars, uh, rock and roll, everything," unlike those more polished conversations that he had with his female clients at the salon. Gary claimed that "a salon's a different setting, ya know? I mean, it's just like... a storehouse with... one person coming in right after the other, you know? Salon, you make an appointment, you gotta... treat 'em really nice. You know, you kinda have to smooth-move 'em, you know?" This barbershop is a place where men show their "lower instincts" and "woman dare not enter," by virtue of the prevalent male gaze if not the conversations held.

## LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

U.S. Male may seem to most outsiders as located in an inconvenient spot. For those traveling on Lancaster Pike in the South direction, crossing the highway into the parking lot can be a dangerous feat. The parking lot holds few automobiles although it is shared among the three businesses in the strip mall. The shop can hold approximately fifteen people at full capacity, and at times on the busiest of days people will stand inside to wait their turn. But this barbershop, despite its deficiencies, has some clear strategic advantages over its competitors.

In Hockessin, there are three listings that appear under the heading “Barbers” in the yellow pages; however, U.S. Male has the distinct advantage of listing the term “male” in its title. The other two, by contrast, have the word “Design” in their titles. This is a serious point because few men go to salons for haircuts, and the word “Design” subtly suggests that the other hair cutters systems are salons that primarily service women. The word “design” also implies a greater time commitment for the cutting and styling process—This is an added inconvenience to the ever-demanding schedule of the modern man. In popular culture’s ideology, women have more time to devote to this practice of having one’s hair designed because their occupations are perceived as less important and, consequently, less time consuming. Or, as another idea in popular culture purports, women gossip with each other for long periods of time; the “design” center offers them an outlet for this behavior.

## QUESTIONS FOR ME

After a number of trips to the barbershop as an observer, it was time to conduct an interview with one of the barbers. I planned the inevitable interview for the evening, close to the shop’s closing time so as not to inconvenience the barber who chose to speak with me. But this is, in fact, the busiest time of day for the barbers of U.S. Male, so my interview had to wait until after the shop closed. I was

accustomed to the quiet Saturday crowd or weekday afternoon lunch-time group, but on this evening the shop was teeming with wiggling children and rowdy preteens, with people standing while waiting for the next available barber. The barbers themselves were moving at a rapid pace, much more so than I had seen them do before. I had settled in a free seat between a mother on my left who was trying to settle her son and daughter and a father on my right who was doing the same with his son and daughter. This, incidentally, was the only time that anyone ever bothered to speak to me.

I felt as though I blended in more this time, if only because there were other women inside. I asked the woman to my left if she wanted me to stand so that her son and/or daughter could sit in my seat, but she said that I was fine where I was. I asked the man to my right the same question, and he, too, said that I was fine sitting there. His daughter stared at me the entire time, though obviously not in the same way that the men did when I went earlier in the day. I imagined how I would have reacted as a child of her age if I were with my dad in a barbershop and I saw a woman in her early twenties sitting in the chair next to me with no male companion. I concluded that she thought that I was there for a haircut, just as her father was there for one.

I overheard the girl asking her father what I was doing here. He laughingly replied, "Why don't you ask her?" I was sure that he understood why I was there—the notebook and my typically ferocious writing were apparent—but for the only time in my study, I explained I was there to observe behaviors that are specific to a barbershop. He then leaned over to his daughter and said to her, "A barbershop is a very good place to observe behavior." This was the most endearing moment of my entire project. The man then got up to get his haircut.

The next fifteen minutes passed quickly. I looked up to find the shop empty, save for the four barbers cleaning up and me. Gary walked up to me, casually asking me what I was doing. I was caught off guard by his approach, not only because I was taking notes, but also because it was one of only three occasions when I was acknowledged by any of the barbers. For a time, I thought that they purposely ignored me, but

my introverted behavior may have encouraged them to assume that I did not want my note-taking session to be disturbed. I must admit that that evening I was glad I did not have to try to coerce any of the barbers to agree to an interview with me.

Still slightly uncomfortable in the interviewing position, I was on guard at the beginning of my conversation with Gary. Gradually, however, we both got used to each other, and we even laughed through the interview. I found it amusing that, although he said that he chose to leave the salon because he found men easier to deal with, he seemed comfortable around me as I interviewed him—or at least more so than when I was initially around him. He continued to talk with me even after the tape recorder had stopped and, although I felt more alienated by some of his answers, I respected his honesty when answering my questions. Although I obviously was perturbed by some of the comments he made, in retrospect I'm glad that he made them. Not only did his information expand my initial paper topic, but he allowed me to dig for answers that I did not realize I needed or wanted. I now understand that, although at that point my objective was to determine the types of men who use this particular barbershop, I inadvertently asked him about the male/female dynamics that occurred within this shop because of my own apprehension.

## CONCLUSIONS

During this project, I felt uncomfortable going into the barber-shop because I usually was the only woman present. Overwhelming dread filled me each time I woke up and realized that I had to go back to the shop for additional research. This feeling confused me since generally I feel more comfortable around men than women (the majority of my friends and relatives who are within my age range are men). I have decided that it is not the men, but the staring that bothered me. Though I tried to ignore this situation and focus on the original intent of my project, thoughts on gender issues continually cropped up in the back of my mind.



The shop, the customers, and the barbers all evinced masculinity—but gender was not foremost in their thoughts and antagonizing women was never their intention. Wives and girlfriends may be easy topics of conversation, but such conversation is neither imperative nor intentionally disrespected. Also, Gary made me realize that women in salons are not necessarily different from men in barbershops: a woman in a barbershop is approximately the equivalent of a man in a salon. Each day in the salon, Gary was stared at by the customers and he felt misplaced among the dominant sex of that environment, despite efforts to polish his conversations and integrate himself into the salon.

Luckily, despite being sidetracked by my personal fascination with the gender issues, I did find some answers to my initial questions about what types of men go to this barbershop to get a haircut. I determined that men who go to U.S. Male are there for the convenience of a “quick trim.” At any time of the day, on practically every day of the year, there are four barbers present who deftly give haircuts at a rate of only ten to fifteen minutes per customer. If the shop looks too full, neither customer nor barber has any qualms about a customer walking out and coming back at a later time; they both can be sure that at some other point in the day it will be possible for the customer to get in and out of there in approximately fifteen minutes.

The mornings, on average, are slower than the afternoons and evenings, not only because people are less awake and therefore are less likely to be in a hurry, but also because the rush typically occurs at the end of the day, leaving the barber to service as many customers as possible before the shop closes (6 P.M. on weekdays and at 2 P.M. on Saturdays). As Gary told me and I also observed, older, mostly retired men went to the shop in the morning, when there are few, if any, customers. The barbers then had a chance to slow down and not worry about sitting around in an empty shop, wondering when the customers would begin to pounce again. To me, during those brief moments of time, I regressed fifteen years: I again was sitting across from my brother, who stared back at me as we sat on the wooden

chairs around the tiny coffee table, patiently waiting for my dad and the barber to end their conversation so we could go home and play.

The barber's job is reflected back to him in many ways, just as the mirror he looks into as he works reflects his image. Looking into his mirror at an angle, he can see customers waiting against the opposite wall—sometimes impatient men with other places to be, with other things on their minds. From behind his chair he can see the haircut and the customer's satisfaction or disapproval, or restlessness—the customer's desire to be elsewhere. He also can see whether he is cutting efficiently. With no one in his chair, he can see himself clearly; and just as clearly, he can associate the empty chair with an empty register, an empty pocket, and an empty day spent waiting to fill the time. Efficiency is much of what today's barber's world is about, and his mirror, empty or full, reflects whether he is doing a good job.



*Notes*

1. Name changed to ensure anonymity.
2. "History of Barbering." *The Art of Barbering and the History of the Barber Pole*, 18 March 2002, <<http://www.BarberPole.com/artof.htm>> (10 June 2002).

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# The Shop: Beneath the Threads



*Fred Chalmers*

## THE SHOP

Nestled deep in the heart of Chestertown's historic district lies a shop. A battered, aged exterior brick wall characterizes this particular shop at the surface level. Elegantly constructed trim work, consistent with late nineteenth-century architectural style, lines the shop's façade. Brilliantly colored flower arrangements stand at each side of the entrance like British guards in front of Buckingham Palace. Two large weather-stained windows, one on each side of the entrance, open the building's face, allowing light to creep into the shop's mellow interior. People stroll by, glancing at the array of colors and designs in the displays just beyond each window. Some smile, appreciating the great amount of time that went into making each element of the display visually stimulating, while some just blankly stare and continue on their way. Pigeons take shelter on second floor windowsills, while other birds make use of the roof for a short relaxation before returning to flight. Examining all of the exterior features, the historic building appears to be merely harboring a shop, but much more lies beyond the surface. This building does more than merely provide a space for this shop; rather, it represents a space rich in culture. Beyond the brick walls, behind the glass windows, and past the beautiful flower arrangements lives a distinct culture, character-

ized by rituals, traditions, values, and ideals. This culture is needlepoint, and the shop is Ehrman Tapestry.

#### BEGINNING THE FIELDWORK

Walking through the doors of Ehrman Tapestry more than one year ago, I was ready to begin a part-time job as a computer assistant for the owner of the shop, Alice West. Little did I know that nearly a year later I would be using my job site as a basis for my senior-year fieldwork in anthropology. Throughout my junior year I slaved away on a computer, entering data and taking a small share of the phone-in orders. At the beginning of my senior year, I was asked to choose a field site to study for a course in anthropological ethnography. A lot of ideas ran through my head—from studying my own dorm to studying the mechanics of the baseball team—but finally one day while I was at work, a light bulb went off in my head. It didn't just go off, it nearly exploded. I was sitting on an anthropological gold mine. With all of the subcultures of Chestertown, I had one right in my lap. Although it took me a class assignment to make me realize it, Ehrman Tapestry has its own set of ideals, values, and rituals that distinguish it from other retail shops. I had made up my mind: I would study needlepoint in Chestertown through the looking glass of Ehrman Tapestry.

Entering the site for my first day as a field worker, I felt comfortable around all of my future informants, having already developed special relationships with each of the workers in the shop. I considered each of them a friend whom I could interview without hesitation or nervousness. I felt fortunate to have developed these relationships because I ultimately avoided the difficult first step in fieldwork, establishing a feeling of comfort between the informants and the ethnographer.

When I asked Alice West, my main informant, whether she would mind if I conducted my fieldwork at her shop for the semester, she initially laughed. She never thought that her shop or the art of needlepoint would ever be a topic in an anthropology course. She was un-

clear as to how her shop could be called a subculture. After I explained exactly what I was going to do, she said that she would be willing to provide me with as much information as I would need throughout the semester. What I valued most about having Alice as an informant is that she seemed to gain interest in the topic as we progressed. As my fieldwork developed, she seemed to open up more and more with each session. I attribute this to an increasing level of comfort between us. The key to any good ethnography is a strong relationship between the informant and the fieldworker. As the bond strengthens, the significance and amount of information will generally improve. As we progressed, I knew that I could rely on her to provide me with any information that I needed to benefit the project. There were certain instances when she would actually provide me with too much information, which I found funny because I was initially worried about gathering enough information to turn in a significant product. Once we held our first few sessions talking about the subculture, I was confident that this would work out and I could thoroughly display the cultural scene of needlepoint in relation to Ehrman Tapestry.

#### WHAT I WAS ATTEMPTING TO REVEAL

In the realm of anthropology, many different factors make a place unique. Nearly every site displays a certain sense of cultural identity. In looking for cultural identity, ideals, values, traditions, and rituals are important. All of these are revealed in Ehrman Tapestry. I attempted to gain a sense of culture by examining the daily activities at the shop and the needlepoint culture as a whole: I looked at the daily routines of the workers; I examined the types of people who walked in the shop to share their interests in needlepoint. I soon realized that a small population of local people share needlepoint as a common interest, though I was surprised to find that over 40,000 United States citizens buy needlepoint kits from Ehrman Tapestry every year. Thus Ehrman Tapestry is a microcosm of a larger picture, representing a

“Mecca” for tens of thousands of needlepointers in the United States. Inside the shop’s walls daily rituals support a cultural identity. I attempted to understand Ehrman Tapestry as a shop rich in culture and worthy of anthropological study. Rather than look at just the operations of the shop, I would look at the shop in the context of the needlepointing world. By noting what the shop means to both locals and people thousands of miles away, I would conduct my research to reveal the shadowed but rich culture of needlepoint.

#### A WALK THROUGH THE SHOP

Located on Cross Street in Chestertown’s historic district, Ehrman Tapestry sits among other similarly constructed shops. Stepping from the outside into the shop is like entering a jungle of brilliant colors. The shop is elegantly decorated with various finished products of pillow kits that the company sells to its customers. By examining the walls and displays, one can get a good sense of what the company has to offer. The front of the store is a display of many different needlepoint designs that the shop offers. In each corner of the room there are two couches that have pillows randomly spread about them in a colorful and attractive manner. Alice West designs each display to provide examples of what the finished kits look like to the local customers who browse the shop daily. “The displays also add such a beautiful dimension to what could be a dull shop,” she says. The flooring consists of polished hardwood, which adds an inviting sense to the shop. Intimate track lighting lines the ceiling, enhancing the cozy feeling Alice tries to create. Toward the back of the room is the main counter where all of the purchasing and Internet sales are processed. Adjacent to the counter in the rear corner of the shop is the wall of yarns. This rainbow of colors provides examples of the wide spectrum of yarn colors offered by the shop. People searching for one piece of yarn can bring in their own yarn and match it to the corresponding color on the wall to finish their projects. This is a common occurrence in the shop.

Beyond the displays is the back room. One must walk through a narrow corridor to reach this room where the employees fill major orders and do minor computer work. This is where I spent most of my time while working. All the main files and past orders are also stored in this area. More importantly, it is the site of each day's ritualistic lunch periods. Beyond this room is "the hole." This tightly spaced, damp, and dark room is where all of the needlepoint kits are alphabetically stored for ease of filling orders. This is one of the only areas of the shop that Alice truly wishes she could make more hospitable, but since it is only used for storage, she decided that it would not be necessary to put a significant amount of money into a renovation project.

Although Ehrman Tapestry lacks spaciousness, each part of the shop makes efficient use of its space. Alice is proud of what she has done with the shop's interior. "It's everything I always wanted in a needlepoint shop...except for that darn 'hole,' but what are you gonna do?" she says. I asked her whether she would ever consider moving to a larger location, but she insists that she is absolutely "in love" with Chestertown. A visit with her husband to the historic city about ten years ago convinced her that she would operate her business and eventually retire here. I think the shop's lack of space actually adds to the atmosphere of the shop. Walking through the doors is like being transported to another world, a world filled with brilliant colors and comfortable silence. This is a perfect place for Ehrman Tapestry to operate on a small, friendly, and cozy scale. What is quite interesting is the enormous amount of customers who are served from such a quaint, small location deep in Chestertown. Ahhh, the beauty of Internet technology.

## MEET THE INFORMANTS

The cooperation between the fieldworker and his or her informants is vital in the process of undertaking anthropological research. Having formed very close bonds with each of my co-workers at the

shop, I decided that I would be able to gather enough information from each of them individually to produce a good ethnography. The owner of the shop, Alice West, was my main informant and provided me with the most interesting and revealing information.

Born in New York City, Alice has had an interesting career which resulted in her current status as head of the U.S. division of Ehrman Tapestry. Her ongoing desire to succeed coupled with her undying love for art and marketing were the catalysts in the rise to her current position in the needlepoint business. Alice and her husband of over thirty-five years currently reside in a recently renovated historic home in Chestertown.

Mary, the office manager and worker responsible for all of the orders sent out each day, was another of my informants. She is a pleasant woman with a seemingly eternal smile on her face. Her frequent jogging trips shows her concern for health and fitness.

The final member of my trio of informants was Regina, who was mainly responsible for taking a majority of the phone-in orders, as well as filling the Internet orders. Although she works in the back, she is a vital link in the smooth operation of the shop.

Regardless of their status in the shop, each of my informants was essential to my research. Although I initially did not feel that I needed to use three informants to do my work, I now realize that each person provided me with a slightly different perspective on the shop's operations, and with various views on certain topics of discussion including the current state of needlepoint.

#### A DAY AT THE SHOP

Ehrman Tapestry is a fairly new addition to the historic district. When Alice West moved her shop from Ellicott City, Maryland, to its current location a year ago, she was not expecting great financial results. Although the shop did well in Ellicott City its first six years, it lacked the space to offer customers a display of the different pillow designs the shop had to offer. In relocating to Chestertown, Alice felt



that she would be able to both display her designs to customers who wanted to walk through and admire them, as well as have a shop in which she could run her escalating business. Ultimately, her move to Chestertown has proved to be very successful. Her rapidly growing business is expanding each day. She says, "I couldn't be happier with how we are doing...The art of needlepoint is being reborn." After a momentary lapse in sales in 1998, Ehrman Tapestry is flourishing.

A typical day at the shop begins around 7:30 in the morning. Alice is always the first to arrive, followed by Mary and Regina at 9 A.M. Attempting to maintain her physical health, Alice begins her day with a light run around the historic district before arriving at the shop. From the time of her arrival until the time when her other workers show up, Alice does minor office odds and ends, such as vacuuming the floors, taking out the trash, and sprucing up the shop's displays. Being a woman who adores change, she will often alter the window displays at the front of the store in the morning hours before the real business work begins at 9. "I like to give the people a variety of designs to look at each day...you would be surprised at the amount of people who pause to look at our displays. If they see something that they like, they will more than likely come in," Alice says. Ehrman Tapestry relies heavily upon its in-shop sales to boost its business. This is something that Alice could not rely upon in her former shop; it gives the Chestertown shop a financial advantage. So it is important for Alice to provide the people with a visually stimulating view from the streets. It simply attracts business.

It is not until all of the workers have arrived and the shop is open for business that the real work begins. From 9 A.M. until 5 P.M., when the shop officially closes its doors, the harsh ring of the telephone is constant. Order after order is called in from all corners of the United States. "It tends to get out of hand sometimes. People call non-stop demanding kits," says Regina. The business' success would struggle if it weren't for the constant phone-in orders. Although Internet orders are on the rise, telephone orders still account for a majority of business.

Another common occurrence in the shop is people requesting

extra yarn for kits that they might have been working on. Nearly every hour a local will enter the shop and march directly to the rainbow of colors in the back of the shop to match their yarn color with the corresponding color on the wall. Suppliers of scrap yarn are a rarity in the area, so the shop attracts many people who need extra yarn. Ehrman basically has a monopoly on the supply of quality scrap yarn in the area. They offer Anchor brand, a popular and well-made yarn, to the delight of many of Chestertown's needlepoint enthusiasts.

Once all of the orders have been filled and bagged up, a final count is done to make sure each order is properly filled and addressed. At around 4:30 P.M. each day a UPS representative will gather up the packages. At 5:00 P.M., another day has concluded at the shop. Of course each worker takes a break at midday for lunch, but other than this brief break in the action, the workers are kept busy with the tedious job of filling orders for the tens of thousands of needlepointers throughout the country.

#### RITUAL BENEATH THE BUSINESS

Every culture is characterized by rituals or repetitive actions that evoke a special meaning or purpose shared by every member of that community. Ritualistic actions help to shape the community's ideals and values, as well as provide insight into the daily practices of a certain group of people. Since Ehrman Tapestry is a microcosm of the larger picture of needlepoint, each ritual action provides meaning for both the shop and the art as a whole. It is important not to confuse ritual with everyday routines. As opposed to a routine, ritual has a deeper value or meaning. Like Indian dances or tribal customs, there are other forms of ritual that can be observed in an office setting.

I observed a number of rituals while doing my fieldwork at Ehrman Tapestry. Each one helped me as an observer to gain a better sense of the world of needlepoint, both locally and abroad. I attempted to look beyond the business of the shop—and realized was that ritual can take on a variety of forms.



My first recognition of ritual in action did not occur until weeks into my fieldwork. I had been visiting the site for some time, gathering ideas, notes, and interviews, without realizing what was happening around me. It was Friday and I was talking to Alice about some of the shop's operations when a group of older locals entered the shop. Each one had a piece of yarn or other needlepoint artifact in their possession. Each said "hello" to Alice and then sat around the table near the back of the shop. I must admit that I was a bit confused, for these women seemed to enter fairly routinely. I disregarded the occurrence and went about my business of observing. The same time next week, I returned to the shop to do more fieldwork when the same thing happened: the same group of women entered the shop around 2 P.M. on Friday afternoon, each with a certain piece of needlepoint in their possession. I thought to myself for a second and then grinned, for I was witnessing something vital to my fieldwork. This was ritual. Each week this small group of local needlepoint enthusiasts congregates at the shop to chat about local events, needlepoint, and world news. These women seem to honor the shop as their own meeting ground. Ehrman Tapestry, believe it or not, is the site of a ritual. After I realized that I was observing ritual, I made it a point to be at the shop every Friday to witness this ritual and gather other information for my fieldwork. The range of topics upon which these women conversed was immense, but they always reverted back to needlepoint. Each Friday they spoke of new techniques, new designs, and the status of some famous needle pointers among other the topics. I had the opportunity to speak to one of the women about the group ritual. In response to my question why the shop was a good place for these women to meet, she said, "It is just so relaxing in here. I love needlepoint, and being in here is like being a kid in a candy store." The shop represents a place of solace for these women who seek companionship in a changing world. Needlepoint is a common activity for elderly women, and these women meet to express their love for this art, as well as to share friendships with others who share the same interests. This is the true meaning behind the ritual.

Another ritual I observed, but in a much more direct manner, was the act of eating lunch. At Ehrman Tapestry, the workers of the shop abruptly stop what they are doing at noon each day to eat lunch. The ritual begins by pulling out the lunch table from up against the wall. Each worker has a distinct role in the process. Alice usually pulls the table out while one person grabs everyone's lunch from the refrigerator. After things are in place, Alice sits in her normal place at the head of the table, while Mary and Regina sit at either side. Whether it was planned, there is a definite hierarchical seating arrangement for lunch. Once they are all seated, conversation will normally follow. Much like the group of women who meet on Friday, Alice and her co-workers will discuss current events, but they try to stay away from needlepoint issues. They have to deal with needlepoint all day. This is a designated time for relaxation. I especially appreciated the lunch break because it is not a common occurrence in today's occupational world. Most people eat and run; they try to squeeze in five minutes in their hectic day to grab a bite to eat, only to hastily return to the workplace. At Ehrman Tapestry, special attention is given to lunchtime. This is a rare time when the phone is left unanswered and everyone relaxes. One day I asked Alice why they have such a formal lunch break. She chuckled and replied, "Lunch has always been my favorite part of the day. I think everyone needs a break in their day, so this is what we do to relax...It doesn't hurt to take a half hour out of the day to sit and talk." When she said "sit and talk," I realized that the workers of Ehrman Tapestry have something that not every workplace has. They retain a strong sense of companionship and unity. I watch the way they interact and I realize that close bonds have developed between them. To have successful, fluid operation, the people in the workplace must be able to co-exist in harmony; the workers of Ehrman Tapestry do. It is reflected in their lunch breaks. This is the meaning that ultimately feeds the ritual.

## TRYING IT OUT

Since I was doing fieldwork on needlepoint, I figured it would only be sensible to try it out for myself. I entered Ehrman Tapestry one warm Thursday afternoon to defy the sociological norms of gender. I, Fred Chalmers, was going to do needlepoint. I sat at the table, and scissors, yarn, a canvas, a magnifying glass and a few assorted needles lay before me. I had no idea what I was doing. Needless to say I felt out of place. Alice took me on a step-by-step journey through the world of needlepoint. I began with a common continental stitch using tapestry yarn. Following Alice's instruction, I completed four lines of canvas. I sat there and thought to myself, "This really isn't that difficult." After I had completed my four lines, I realized why people enjoyed this; it's both easy and beautiful. Examining each line of fabric, I saw the brilliance in each color. It only took me, a beginner, less than five minutes to do the four lines, and I could already note the beauty of the art. Before doing it, I had not a clue as to why people would spend their time and money on this art. I now knew what the fuss was all about.

## ARTIFACTS IN THE FIELD

Every anthropologist's fieldsite has a number of artifacts that solidify the culture being studied. In this case, Ehrman Tapestry was full of wonderful artifacts that would tell a story about needlepoint. Because I cannot speak about every artifact in the shop, I chose those I thought to be the most essential. In saying that an artifact is essential, I am saying that it embodies the shop as a whole. Without the essential artifacts, there would be something missing that would ultimately destroy the cultural identity of the site.

I discovered the first significant artifact early in my fieldwork. Each week during the congregation of locals in the shop, I noticed something significant: a lot of time was spent near the needlepoint table in the rear of the shop. Honored as a common gathering place

for the small group of needlepoint enthusiasts, this worktable was the first significant artifact I observed at Ehrman Tapestry. Known as the “mable” by the shop workers, the table provides a large surface for needlepointing and a high-powered magnifying glass attached by an adjustable arm. By combining the terms magnifying glass and table, the workers came up with “mable”...ingenious. Each Friday, the women gathered to take advantage of the mable’s features to perform difficult needlepoint tasks that they could not do on their own surfaces at home. More than providing a place to work on their designs, the mable functioned as a focal point around which women could display new techniques that they had picked up while experimenting. The mable proved to be a vital piece of the cultural activity of the shop.

Every retail shop must provide its customers with a proper listing of what it offers for sale. Ehrman Tapestry relies heavily on the catalogue to show customers what kits and materials are available. Released once a year, the Ehrman Tapestry catalogue has become an extremely valuable item to customers and to the thousands of needlepoint enthusiasts throughout the United States. The catalogue is an excellent representation of cultural stability. This year’s catalogue provides fifty-six full-color pages of Ehrman kits and supplies. Small biographies of the kit designers are also included in the middle section. Kaffe Fassett, Raymond Honeyman, Margaret Murton, Candace Bahouth, and Elian McCready are among the famous artists who provide splendid designs for the company. Many customers are also collecting the catalogues. “It’s amazing how many people request these catalogues even though people can easily order through our website,” says Alice. Even with full color pictures of the designs on the Internet, people still request the catalogue for personal collection or hands-on information. I think this is partly because a majority of the customers are older and have not adjusted to the technological role of the Internet in today’s world.

“The old-fashioned customers just won’t accept the fact that our catalog is online...I guess they just want to stick with tradition,” says

Alice. Regardless, the catalogue remains one of the most important elements in the success of the business. The easily navigated website and the visually pleasing catalog both offer good options for people attempting to explore the world of Ehrman needlepoint.

## A GRAND GATHERING

There are moments in fieldwork when an anthropologist has a significant realization. This happened for me on the evening of Wednesday, October 24, when I had the opportunity to attend a presentation by the legendary Kaffe Fassett. When I say legendary, I mean in the needlepoint world. He is widely regarded as one of the world's leading textile artists and he is undoubtedly one of the world's most original colorists. Sponsored by Ehrman Tapestry, the presentation was given in Bob Ortiz's studio, a few streets down from the Ehrman shop. This was a wonderful opportunity for me to listen to a highly renowned designer, as well as to examine pieces that he has designed himself. As I sat there and listened attentively to Kaffe's words on needlepoint, I became aware that I was sitting in a room of over 120 people representing different regions of the entire East Coast. Some of these people traveled hundreds of miles to see this man and listen to his ideas as well as see his work. I asked myself questions like, "Is needlepoint this important?" and "Why would these people come all this way for a designer?" I found it remarkable that the small town of Chestertown would attract so many people merely by holding a presentation of Kaffe Fassett's work. This is what it took to make me realize that needlepoint is bigger than I ever imagined. Alice had told me that many people enjoyed it, and it was growing; but it took a concrete experience such as this to wake me up. People stared in delight at each slide that Kaffe displayed on the screen. These people really loved needlepoint. Among the crowd, I recognized some of the members of the Friday shop congregations. I recognized people that I had no idea were even interested in needlepoint. I finally got the picture. Ehrman Tapestry had brought together a vast group

of people, all of whom shared the same common interest: needlepoint. I had finally experienced a great revelation in my fieldwork, and it felt good.

#### PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Beyond the brick walls, behind the historic façade, is a cultural world characterized by a plethora of rituals, ideals, values, and meanings. Ehrman Tapestry is not just a shop. Although I commonly refer to it as a shop, it is a place where the culture of needlepoint is exposed. The shop provides a place of solace for people who share common interests, goals, and skills. It provides a place where the tens of thousands of needlepoint enthusiasts in the United States can order one of hundreds of needlepoint kits. More than any of this, Ehrman Tapestry is a symbol of a culture. This needlepoint culture reaches from the walls of the shop to the outskirts of Chestertown and beyond, to the edges of the country. This shop is a “Mecca” for the huge number of needlepointers encompassing this great country. It’s amazing how one little shop can be filled with so much cultural identity. Ehrman Tapestry is a foundation for needlepoint as a whole. It allows people from all areas of the country to participate in the vast world of needlepoint, whether on the Internet, through the mail, or on the phone. As long as current trends continue, Ehrman Tapestry will sell products, preserve the art of needlepoint, and most importantly, bring together a rich culture; it remains a cornerstone of the needlepoint community.





# Hieronymous Bosch's Diverse Approaches to Space as Demonstrated in *Death of the Miser*, *Garden of Earthly Delights*, and the *Ghent Carrying of the Cross*



Michael C. Duck

Hieronymous Bosch's use of space is rarely the main focus of studies of his work. Analyses of Bosch tend to focus primarily on his iconography, and in many ways this emphasis is understandable: Bosch's unique imagery is what evokes most modern viewers' immediate response. After all, it's hard to overlook his imagery in works like his *Garden of Earthly Delights* triptych, which ranges from a couple fornicating inside a clamshell to a bird-beaked Satan defecating sinners. Indeed, the *Grove Dictionary of Art* goes so far as to say that Bosch's works are "best considered in terms of their iconography," maintaining that efforts to categorize them based on his "stylistic development" over the course of his career are largely "self-contradictory and subjective."<sup>1</sup> While there may be merit to that claim, the *Grove* uses it to justify an inaccurate conclusion. Even if attempts to classify his work based on chronology are unsuccessful, Bosch's diverse approaches to three dimensional space in his drawings demand as much attention as his iconography.

Indeed, Bosch's use of space is just as expansive as his iconography. His works range from the rigid perspectival system of *Death of the Miser* to the "world landscapes"<sup>2</sup> of *Garden of Earthly Delights* to the almost total lack of depth in the Ghent *Carrying of the Cross*.<sup>3</sup> Clearly, these three approaches to space are radically different—mutually exclusive, in fact—but Bosch uses each with a similar degree of competency. The variety in Bosch's use of space for each of these three works suggests a conscious decision in each case: since Bosch's technique is not limited to any single convention in its representation of space, he must actively have chosen how to use space in each work. Consequently, Bosch's decisions of how to represent space in individual works were closely tied to his dramatic or rhetorical goals for each one; this relationship is demonstrated in the examples of *Death of the Miser*, *Garden of Earthly Delights*, and *Carrying of the Cross*.

The *Death of the Miser*<sup>4</sup> shows a conscious choice to employ techniques of linear perspective to define the three-dimensional space represented in the painting. Virtually every art historian who writes about the work at least mentions its "box-like interior" or its "sharply delineated perspective."<sup>5</sup> The painting stands out within Bosch's body of work not only as one of his few paintings to use linear perspective in such an obvious fashion but also as one of his few interior scenes.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, Wilhelm Fraenger, von Baldass, and Linfert all compare Bosch to the Master of Flémalle in their related depictions of interior space (although Fraenger and Linfert emphasize the differences in their approaches more than the similarities).<sup>7</sup> Due to Bosch's connections with Leonardo da Vinci and Italian artistic traditions—as explored in Leonard J. Slatkes's article "Hieronymous Bosch and Italy"—the systems of linear perspective used by Italian artists might also have been an influence.<sup>8</sup> Slatkes suggests that Bosch probably traveled to northern Italy, although dates are speculative at best. Still, even if *Death of the Miser* was executed prior to his visit to Italy, reproductions of Italian works employing linear perspective could have reached Bosch and influenced him.



Perhaps the most pertinent comparison, however, would be to Jan van Eyck. Precisely speaking, neither Bosch nor van Eyck followed the rules of the perspective schemes put forward by the Italians Filippo Brunelleschi and Leon Battista Alberti. In the Italian systems, lines receding in space appear to converge toward vanishing points that are located on a horizontal line at eye level with the viewer. This line is actually identified with the horizon itself.<sup>9</sup> Following these rules, no vanishing points can be higher or lower than any others; they must all fall on the horizon. Nevertheless, as David L. Carleton has demonstrated, van Eyck uses multiple vanishing points arranged vertically in a variety of his works. *Death of the Miser* is remarkably similar in its use of at least two “vanishing fields,” both located at or just beyond the right edge of the painting: the ceiling uses a vanishing point above the right rear corner of the bed, while the orthogonals from most other objects in the room recede toward a less well-defined vanishing field located farther outside the picture.<sup>10</sup> Bosch may not have been aware of the specific details of van Eyck’s perspective techniques, but the similarities between van Eyck’s use of linear perspective and that seen in *Death of the Miser* are clear.

Regardless of the specific precedent, it is clear that Bosch’s use of space is one of the key ways he heightens the dramatic tension at the heart of the work. Despite the wide variety of interpretations Bosch’s iconography usually inspires, virtually all critics and art historians agree that *Death of the Miser* depicts a soul at the crossroads. The narrative of the painting is self-evident: death has come for the man, and he must choose between his greed and his salvation. A demon offers him a bag of money, while an angel struggles to redirect his attention to the crucifix above the door. As Walter S. Gibson has pointed out, the outcome of this moment of decision is very much an open question.<sup>11</sup> In fact, the very use of space in the work underscores this moment of uncertainty. Although Wilhelm Fraenger’s interpretations of Bosch’s iconography have been attacked frequently by Gibson and others (and often justly so), his analysis of *Death of the Miser*’s composition is intriguing.<sup>12</sup> Fraenger contrasts the stability of

the “narrow column on the left and...the clean right angles at its base” with a “threateningly unstable diagonal” leading up from the dagger that props open the chest, through the curtain draped over the demon at the man’s bedside, and up towards the demon perched on top of the bed’s canopy.<sup>13</sup> Put in other terms, this unstable diagonal opposes and undermines the rigidity established by Bosch’s use of perspective to define the room. In this optical tension, Fraenger finds an optical analogy for the moral question at the painting’s heart: “instability as opposed to steadfastness.”<sup>14</sup>

The rigid, confining space of the room—which is explicitly defined through Bosch’s use of perspective—also plays a crucial role in enhancing the drama of the work. Fraenger notes that the painting “creates through its very format a feeling of terrible constriction, intensified by the narrow room receding into the depths of darkness”; he later speaks of the “cramped oppressiveness of the room.”<sup>15</sup> Linfert makes a similar observation: in discussing the work’s “sharply delineated perspective,” he notes how “firmly...the basic outlines of the room are defined, making it virtually a trap closed on its occupant, with everything narrowly confined and pungently drawn.”<sup>16</sup> The narrow and sharply defined room offers no route for the man (or the viewer) to escape this moment of decision. Again, the visual space reinforces the narrative: the man is trapped and cannot delay his decision any longer—he must choose between his chest and money bag on the one hand, and the crucifix and his rosary on the other. In trapping the viewer in the same closed space of the room, Bosch implicitly extends the drama to the viewer, highlighting that he or she will reach this moment of decision as well. In this way, *Death of the Miser’s* narrow interior, as defined through Bosch’s system of linear perspective, works both to involve the viewer rhetorically and to heighten the drama of the work’s narrative.

The *Death of the Miser’s* cramped interior with its distinct use of perspective stands in stark contrast to the “world landscapes” of *Garden of Earthly Delights*. Although art historians disagree widely as to Bosch’s intent (Fraenger generally views it as a celebration of inno-

cent and unrestrained sexuality, but most others see it as a condemnation of such unbridled lust), clearly the drama is depicted in universal proportions. While *Death of the Miser* shows a single individual as an allegory for all men, *Garden of Earthly Delights* includes countless individuals either engaged in amorous pursuits in the central panel or suffering grotesquely in Hell in the right panel. Unlike the moment of choice emphasized in the *Death of the Miser*, the narrative of the triptych reaches from the Garden of Eden to man's suffering in Hell. Bosch has moved from the closed room and personal scale of *Death of the Miser* to a drama that spans creation.

Rather than confining the viewer within a rigidly defined chamber, the exterior of the *Garden of Earthly Delights* triptych removes the viewer from the earth itself, allowing him or her to view God creating the earth. Many art historians—including von Baldass and Fraenger—interpret the scene as the third day of creation (described in Genesis 1:9–13) when God separated dry land from the seas and brought forth vegetation on the earth.<sup>17</sup> Linfert, in contrast, supports E.H. Gobrecht's interpretation that it represents God's re-creation of the world after the Flood.<sup>18</sup> In either case, one can support von Baldass's argument that this depiction of the "orb of the earth" on the exterior reinforces the "universal character of the triptych" as a whole. Its sweeping, densely populated landscapes have much in common with the "world landscapes" Gibson describes in his book *"Mirror of the Earth": The World Landscape in Sixteenth-century Flemish Painting*.

Like the landscapes of *Garden of Earthly Delights*, the Flemish "world landscapes" Gibson describes do not represent specific, local topography; they depict instead a huge, intricately detailed landscape that, in a sense, "encompass[es] the whole world [in that they] possess something of the diversity and extent of the earth's surface."<sup>19</sup> In terms of "diversity," these landscapes are notable for their "encyclopedic accumulation of detail"; as for their representation of the "extent of the earth's surface," Gibson notes, "The sense of vastness is enhanced by the unnaturally elevated horizons of these landscapes and the clarity with which even remote regions are often shown."<sup>20</sup>

This description can be applied just as accurately to the landscapes of *Garden of Earthly Delights*. The work's "encyclopedic accumulation of detail" is one of the main reasons so much ink has been spilled over its iconography.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, Bosch also employs the "elevated horizon" Gibson describes: in each panel of the interior, the horizon is located at the top of the visual space. These similarities are not lost on Gibson; he cites Bosch and his "hell scenes" as an influence on Joachim Patinir, the "earliest known [Flemish] landscape specialist" and the main progenitor of the tradition specifically described.<sup>22</sup>

To create the three-dimensional space of this world landscape, Bosch employs techniques that are strikingly different from those used in *Death of the Miser*. Linear perspective is almost totally absent in *Garden of Earthly Delights*; no distinct orthogonal lines recede to any clearly defined vanishing points. The closest Bosch comes to explicit linear perspective is in the foreshortened circles of the disc of the world on the triptych's exterior and the central fountain of the interior's central panel. In addition, Bosch's elevated horizon violates a traditional principle of linear perspective. According to Brunelleschi and Alberti's rules for linear perspective, the horizon line must be at eye level. Or, as Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola put it, "the true rule of perspective" is to "plac[e] the horizon at your level."<sup>23</sup>

While *Death of the Miser* only strays from this principle (its vanishing points that do not all fall on the same horizontal line), the greatly elevated horizons of the interior panels of *Garden of Earthly Delights* blatantly violate it. The placement of the horizon seems to indicate that the vantage point is high off the ground, with the viewer looking forward and slightly downward. However, linear perspective indicates that the figures in the foreground are almost underneath the viewer and should therefore appear foreshortened, but Bosch does not show them that way. More importantly, a precise use of linear perspective would result in much more overlapping of the multitude of figures Bosch depicts, potentially limiting the encyclopedic detail he needs to include in these world landscapes. Bosch's solution is to

minimize his use of the conventions of linear perspective, effectively tilting the “horizontal” ground of the picture towards the viewer, reducing the overlapping of figures and allowing for more detail. Instead of linear perspective, Bosch relies on atmospheric perspective (distant mountains appear more blue and somewhat less defined) and a rough scale of size (figures farther away from the viewer appear smaller). Bosch’s minimization of linear perspective is a crucial part of his creation of a world landscape, which in turn is crucial in indicating the universal scale of the drama the triptych depicts.

Bosch’s use of world landscapes in *Garden of Earthly Delights* is crucial to his artistic goals in other ways, as well. In his analysis of the work, Gibson links the central panel’s setting with its subject, connecting Bosch’s “extensive park-like landscape”<sup>24</sup> with the gardens that serve as the “settings for lovers and love-making” in a variety of contemporary and medieval works of art and literature.<sup>25</sup> And just as the amorous activities depicted on the central panel are best suited to an outdoor landscape, Bosch’s subjects for the right and left panels—Hell and the Garden of Eden, respectively—are obviously best treated as landscapes. Moreover, rather than naturalistically rendering specific locales, Bosch skews the rules of linear perspective to transform these outdoor scenes into world landscapes. Each panel of the triptych represents, in a sense, an entire world: the outside represents the world being created (or re-created); the left panel shows a world with its Creation perfectly completed; the central panel represents a vision of the world gone wrong (or of an ideal world yet to come, in Fraenger’s interpretation); and the right panel shows a violent and grotesque underworld. The universal scale of the drama Bosch depicts is clear.

The striking lack of depth in Bosch’s *Carrying of the Cross* in Ghent reflects yet another approach to the representation of three-dimensional space. Compared to the sharply defined linear perspective of *Death of the Miser* and to the vast world landscapes of *Garden of Earthly Delights*, the extremely shallow space of *Carrying of the Cross* is almost shocking. It represents such an anomaly that Leonard J. Slatkes goes



so far as to suggest, based on its “archaizing composition,” that the work is “a studio repetition, or better, a studio variation of a now lost prime composition [by] Bosch.”<sup>26</sup>

The composition of *Carrying of the Cross* seems designed to minimize depth severely. As von Baldass puts it, “The work is composed almost entirely of heads and hands.”<sup>27</sup> There is no system of linear perspective, and no horizon or background of any sort—only a mad crowd of busts “piled up” in the field of vision.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, von Baldass suggests that the space has essentially no depth: “The composition ... shows a section of so tightly packed a crowd that no room is left in the picture for any indication of space.”<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless, it is possible to argue the opposite position: the composition does allow for an “indication of space.” Even the manner in which the figures overlap suggests a degree of depth. Taking a more complex approach, Linfert argues that Bosch creates a kind of three-dimensional space in this work through the movement of the figures and of the composition itself:

Here,...space depends for its evocation on threatening gestures, twists and turns, and dragging movements, and it truly does exist. ... In this picture the field is narrow and not easy to define, still immersed in the deep furrows and folds of the darkness from which patches are propelled forward almost wildly. Nonetheless, it has already become a perspective network in which Christ is carried along.”<sup>30</sup>

The “narrow and constricted” space of the painting is crammed with men who swarm around Christ and the two thieves, tormenting them and propelling them toward the place of their crucifixion.<sup>31</sup>

Although this is an unusual composition for Bosch, it is not without precedent. In discussing the work’s composition, Slatkes emphasizes what he calls “its archaic piling-up of figures and its complete lack of space”—an implicit reference to medieval techniques for representing (or, in many cases, not representing) depth.<sup>32</sup> Prior to the introduction of linear and atmospheric perspective and other natu-

realistic techniques of the Northern and Italian Renaissances, most artwork either did not represent depth (simply depicting figures in front of a monochromatic field) or did so using the comparatively simple technique of making figures overlap one another. Since both Gordon Marsden and James Marrow emphasize the work's iconographic connections with medieval traditions for representing Christ's Passion and his tormentors, it is not too much of a stretch to suggest that Bosch may have also drawn upon the treatment of space in those medieval representations of this subject.<sup>33</sup>

In addition, one of Bosch's Italian contemporaries may have influenced the composition. Slatkes mentions "northern Italian and Venetian prototypes" for Bosch with similar "half-length composition[s]."<sup>34</sup> If Bosch did visit northern Italy as Slatkes suggests, these could have had a direct effect on *Carrying of the Cross*. In addition, Harbison is just one of many critics who see Leonardo da Vinci as a key influence on this work, claiming that Bosch "must" have been influenced by da Vinci's "physiognomic studies [of] facial distortion."<sup>35</sup> Similarly, Slatkes cites E. Góbrich's statement that "[t]here is much to suggest that [da Vinci's drawing] was known to Hieronymous Bosch,...whose many composition of *Christ Carrying the Cross* seem to derive their inspiration from such compositions of Leonardo."<sup>36</sup> There are striking similarities between the composition of the Ghent *Carrying of the Cross* and that of da Vinci's *Studies of Five Heads*. Both crowd bust-length figures around one another, and as Harbison points out, both "show a similar concern for surrounding an image of nobility with grotesque tormentors."<sup>37</sup>

In all of these cases, the fact remains that Bosch's unusual (for him) use of space in *Carrying of the Cross* is a key element of his representation of this dramatic scene. In minimizing both physical and visual space between the figures, Bosch intensifies the effect of the throng of tormentors crowding around its victims. As Linfert describes it, "[T]he composition as a whole gives the impression of being circular, close crowded and tightly squeezed...The figures swirl around almost as if in a boiling pot."<sup>38</sup> Marrow agrees, noting "the use

of a half-length composition heightens the sense of crowding around Christ.”<sup>39</sup> Marrow links this composition with the “exaggerated physiognomies” Bosch depicts, suggesting that, through both his iconography and his composition, Bosch was following the late medieval tradition of representing Christ’s tormentors as the circling dogs of Psalm 22:17 that surround the innocent victim.<sup>40</sup> Marsden, in contrast, simply points out how the work’s shallow space contributes to this remarkably dramatic moment:

Here at the moment of human history where the supreme example of [the] forces of light—the Son of God himself—is all but extinguished by the victory of evil, Bosch’s genius is to interpret this as the claustrophobic crush of a satanically inspired crowd surrounding him.<sup>41</sup>

Bosch creates that “claustrophobic crush” by piling up his figures in a space with such little depth. The rhetorical effectiveness of the painting depends upon this concentrated crowding. As Marsden implies, Bosch’s use of such an intensely shallow space is crucial in heightening the drama of the moment he represents.

In *Death of the Miser*, *Garden of Earthly Delights*, and the Ghent *Carrying of the Cross*, Bosch’s choices regarding his use of space become intimately linked with the dramatic and rhetorical goals for each work. In each of these examples, Bosch evokes three-dimensional space in totally different ways, each tailored to the specific requirements of the work in which it is used. In *Death of the Miser*, Bosch uses a system of linear perspective to trap the man visually—and the viewer—in his moment of fateful decision; the uncertainty of the moment is intensified when it is contrasted to the rigidly defined room. Although art historians will continue to debate Bosch’s specific rhetorical goals for *Garden of Earthly Delights* until his complex iconography has been conclusively explained, his exhaustively detailed “world landscapes” with their elevated horizons clearly indicate the universal scale of the drama he depicts. And in *Carrying of the Cross*,



the intense visual effect of the swirling and crushing throng of tormentors around Christ and the two thieves is dependant upon Bosch's decision to minimize depth and instead to crowd the bust-length figures into the picture field one on top of another.

The myriad of artists and artistic traditions which may have influenced each of these approaches to space ranges from medieval images of love gardens and of the Passion of Christ, to da Vinci and the Italian Renaissance, to van Eyck and the Master of Flémalle in the north. In the case of the world landscapes of *Garden of Earthly Delights*, one may speculate that Bosch's use of space influenced his younger contemporary Joachim Patinir. That links to so many traditions may be found in Bosch's use of space is simply a testimony to the tremendous diversity of techniques in these three works.

Bosch's facility with such different approaches to space gave him an incredible degree of control as an artist. The fact that *Death of the Miser*, *Garden of Earthly Delights*, and the Ghent *Carrying of the Cross* each use space in such totally different ways indicates that the artist consciously chose his method for evoking space in each work. As Linfert puts it, Bosch's settings "were never mere backdrops or accessories"—instead, they were intimately connected to each work's subject and rhetorical goals.<sup>42</sup> In light of this knowledge, Bosch's decisions regarding his use of space must be analyzed just as carefully as his iconographic choices. Bosch's unique iconography may be the widely accepted proof of his genius as an artist, but his decisions regarding his use of space are no less significant.



Notes

1. "Bosch, Hieronymous," *Grove Dictionary of Art Online*, <<http://www.groveart.com>> (1 November 2001).
2. This term is borrowed from Walter S. Gibson, *Mirror of the Earth: The World Landscape in Sixteenth-Century Flemish Painting* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).
3. See list of Art Works Cited for dates and locations of all art works mentioned.
4. See Appendix, figure 1.
5. Ludwig von Baldass, *Hieronymus Bosch*, trans. unnamed (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1960), 26.
6. Carl Linfert, *Hieronymus Bosch*, Trans. Robert Erich Wolf (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1989), 64; respectively.
7. Wilhelm Fraenger, *Hieronymus Bosch*, trans. Helen Sebba (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1983), 300; von Baldass, 222; Linfert, 64.
8. Leonard J. Slatkes, "Hieronymous Bosch and Italy," *The Art Bulletin* 57 (1975): 335–345. Slatkes does not discuss Bosch's use of Italian-style linear perspective in any detail, but if Bosch did borrow themes and imagery from Italian painters, he could have borrowed their techniques for representing three-dimensional space as well.
9. In Alberti's terms, this line was the "centric line." Martin Kemp, *The Science of Art: Optical Themes in Western Art from Brunelleschi to Seurat* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 23.
10. David L. Carleton, "A Mathematical Analysis of the Perspective of the Arnolfini Portrait and Other Similar Interior Scenes by Jan van Eyck," *The Art Bulletin* 64 (1982): 118–124.
11. Walter S. Gibson, *Hieronymus Bosch* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 47.
12. One example of Gibson's attacks appears in *Ibid.*, 10.
13. Fraenger, 298.

14. Ibid., 298.

15. Ibid., 298, 299.

16. Linfert, 64.

17. von Baldass, 33; Fraenger, 25.

18. Linfert, 30.

19. Gibson, "Mirror," xx.

20. Ibid., xx

21. Although their views are radically opposed, Fraenger and Dirk Bax's comprehensive analyses of this work's iconography have one thing in common: both could accurately be called encyclopedic.

22. Gibson, "Mirror," 6. Gibson notes Bosch's influence on Patinir's *Landscape with a Magical Procession* in particular. Gibson's discussion of Patinir as the "earliest known [Flemish] landscape specialist" appears at Ibid., xx.

23. Kemp, 74.

24. Gibson, *Bosch*, 80.

25. Ibid., 83.

26. Slatkes, 340, 342.

27. von Baldass, 236.

28. This description of the painting is borrowed from Craig Harbison, *The Mirror of the Artist: Northern Renaissance in Its Historical Context* (New York: Prentice Hall and Harry N. Abrams, 1995), 160.

29. von Baldass, 83.

30. Linfert, 114, 116.

31. Ibid., 114.

32. Slatkes, 340.

33. Gordon Marsden, "Bosch's Christ Carrying the Cross," *History Today* 47, no. 4 (1997): 15–21; James Marrow, "Circumdederunt me canes multi: Christ's Tormentors in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance," *The Art Bulletin* 59 (1977): 167–181.

34. Slatkes, 342.

35. Harbison, 160–161.

36. Slatkes, 342, fn 42.

37. Harbison, 161.
38. Linfert, 114.
39. Marrow, 178.
40. Ibid., 178. (Note that the translation of the Bible that Marrow uses cites this verse as Psalm 21:17.)
41. Marsden, 16.
42. Linfert, 64.

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Issac Oliver, *Rainbow Portrait* (c. 1600)  
*Reproduced courtesy of the Marquess of Salisbury, Hatfield House*

# “My Most Seeming Virtuous Queen”: Gertrude and the Manifestation of Aging Sexuality in Early Modern England



*Stephany Fontanone*

In 1600, the Virgin Queen was sixty-eight years old. In private, the signs of age in the queen's face were apparently unmasked by cosmetics, heightening the incongruity between advanced age and the exposed bosom of a maiden. In public, this incongruity was lessened and mystified to a certain degree by the way the queen presented herself. Anthony Rivers, a Jesuit priest, reported that during the Christmas celebrations of 1600, Elizabeth was painted in “some places near half an inch thick.” It is interesting to note the queen's extensive use of cosmetics to portray an image in public—she herself was a painted image just like the portraits praising her. Shirley N. Garner presents a prominent opinion held by early modern society when she states that by painting [their faces], women seduce and lead astray; they evince pride as they make vain efforts to stave off old age. The use of cosmetics was thought to be the work of the devil, uniting so-called good women with whores.<sup>1</sup> Queen Elizabeth's use of cosmetics, however, helped reduce societal anxieties about having an aging monarch on the throne as a new century approached.



Historical evidence places the first publication of *Hamlet* somewhere in the beginning of the seventeenth century, near the midpoint of Shakespeare's career as both a playwright and actor and at the end of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I.<sup>2</sup> As a result, *Hamlet* is a play keenly aware of its late Elizabethan status in which the impending transfer of power from one monarch to another had to be rethought in view of the aging body of the queen.<sup>3</sup> The play marks the moment when, since the queen did not have an heir, the Elizabethan strategies for authorizing monarchy became problematic. The aging widow queen, Gertrude, resonates strongly with the aging virgin queen on the throne. Peter Erickson states that "Gertrude represents the convergence of three issues—sexuality, aging...and succession—that produced a sense of contradiction, even breakdown, in the cult of Elizabeth in the final years of her reign... The latent cultural fantasy in *Hamlet* is that Queen Gertrude functions as a degraded figure of Queen Elizabeth."<sup>4</sup> Therefore, this conundrum of the aging female body, with its overly determined registers of sexuality and death, unites the actual and stage monarch. The play signifies that the society of early modern England was acknowledging the fact that their queen was approaching death.

At the same time the monarch was visibly aging, a new image of an unaging and youthful Elizabeth circulated—the "Rainbow" Portrait (1600) by Issac Oliver.<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth Pomeroy states that "the face is imperviously young, and the Titian-colored hair falls around her shoulders like a maiden's."<sup>6</sup> The portrait itself is rich in coppery hues, although the arc of color the queen holds in her hand is somewhat transparent and not nearly as bright or colorful as her hair and cloak. Her place at the top of the hierarchy is confirmed by her luminescence, which contrasts so vividly with this pale arc she holds in her hand. This contrast ultimately reflects Elizabeth's surpassing relative significance in relation to the natural world. Her grasp of the rainbow also emblemizes the symbolic union of Elizabeth's physical body with the divinity that authorizes it to represent the body politic. This echoes Francis Bacon's notion that "there is in the king not a body natural alone, nor a body politic alone, but a body natural and body



politic together: *corpus corporatum in corpore naturali, et corpus naturale in corpore corporato.*"<sup>7</sup> The painted motto on the portrait is *non sine sole iris*—"no rainbow without the sun." This is a reference to the association between the queen and the sun: Elizabeth shines amongst her dominion. No rainbow shines because the queen outshines it with her own brilliance, her own surpassing light, and her incarnation of political will authorized by the divine. The word "iris" both denotes and connotes rainbow: it denotes the little arc visible in the queen's hand; it connotes all the metaphoric colorings of achievement made possible by the queen's brightness.<sup>8</sup> Though it is tempting to say no rainbow really exists in the portrait, the politics of its representation as absence or presence have a great deal to do with how one reads its significance. It can be taken as either a referent for the decline of absolute power or as a mark of her overshadowing presence that obscures the many colors of the rainbow or transforms them into uniform light.

What is so intriguing about the "Rainbow" Portrait, more than the metaphoric symbols the portrait suggests, is that it was published so late in Elizabeth's reign yet she seems remarkably young. This portrayal is not a coincidence; Elizabeth's throne was never truly secure, and in her old age, representing herself as a strong and vital queen was more important. In 1597 she stated, "I think not to die so soon...and am not so old as they think."<sup>9</sup> Her declaration confirms that her use of cosmetics to conceal her age was an effort to keep her public intrigued by her beauty and to keep them subservient to her power. If her public thought her too old to rule, it would have threatened both her ability and status as a monarch. Therefore, Elizabeth's erotic displays and painted selves were not mere vanity, given all that was at stake in the sovereign aura. Marie Axton contends that they were efforts "to imbue the aging natural body of the monarch with the ageless aura of the body politic which was supposed to be contained within the natural body of the queen."<sup>10</sup> These erotic dynamics of Elizabethan rule had always entailed a certain ambivalence and danger, involving as they did, the construction of ambiguous de-

sire for the queen, not as a monarch, but as a woman. It is important to note that Elizabeth's use of cosmetics was a tactic she used to present herself as a marriageable maiden, despite being well beyond the child-bearing age. What is so intriguing is that society—whether mystified by her aura or loyal to her cult—went along with it.

Elizabeth was always preoccupied with the way she was represented to her subjects and the way in which she represented herself. She was so obsessed with her presentation of self that she would use cosmetics dramatically. This is continuously noted by several foreign visitors, specifically the French ambassador André Hurault-Sieur de Maisse. De Maisse had recorded in journal entries from several occasions some of Elizabeth's efforts to counter the opinion of her public and everyone with whom she came in contact. De Maisse reports from his first audience with Elizabeth in 1600:

She was strangely attired in a dress of sliver cloth, white and crimson...She kept the front of her dress open, and one could see the whole of her bosom [gorge], and passing low, and often she would open the front of this robe with her hands as if she was too hot...On her head she wore a garland of the same material and beneath it a great reddish-coloured wig... Her bosom is somewhat wrinkled as well as the collar that she wears round her neck, but lower down the flesh is exceeding white and delicate, so far as one could see. As for her face, it is and appears to be very aged. It is long and thin, and her teeth are very yellow and unequal, compared with what they were formerly, so they say, and on the left side less than on the right. Many of them are missing so that one cannot understand her easily when she speaks quickly. Her figure is fair and tall and graceful in whatever she does; so far as may be she keeps her dignity, yet humbly and graciously withal.<sup>11</sup>

It is apparent from this account that Elizabeth continued to attempt to embody an alluring and captivating appeal, despite her age. De

Maisse comments that Elizabeth's flesh is "white and delicate so far as one could see"; this shows that Elizabeth represented herself in such a fashion so that her power would never be in jeopardy. This correlates with her erotic displays, since she is essentially attracting men to notice her bosom. The phrase "so far as one could see" is especially important, since it clearly states that Elizabeth was fashioning herself purposely. He notes that Elizabeth's bosom was uncovered, as all the English women had it until they married. This display of her bosom is a complex register of cultural and sumptuary symbolism; it reconfirms her status both as a marriageable maiden and as the nurturing and bountiful mother of England. She achieves this by masking her old age by use of cosmetics.

It is apparent that the queen's appearance and dignity intrigued De Maisse and that he was very much biased on behalf of the queen. As the French ambassador insinuates, these conspicuous self-displays were also a kind of erotic-provocation.<sup>12</sup> In these provocations, Elizabeth succeeded in having her beauty and appeal serve as integral parts of her continuing domination over all who beheld her, since "her figure is fair and tall and graceful in whatever she does." In the process of describing the queen's preoccupation with the impact of her appearance upon her beholders, De Maisse demonstrates its impact upon himself, thus epitomizing the ideas of the Elizabethan cult.

This concept of subjects becoming preoccupied with the aged beauty of the queen or, moreover, the obsession men develop concerning women's aging sexuality is a prevalent theme in *Hamlet*. Shakespearean critics often present the death of his father as the sole reason for Hamlet's dissonance and grief, when it is in fact a combination of grief and mislaid indignation stemming from his mother's sexual vitality. Furthermore, regicide is displaced from both Hamlet's and the audience's attention by the eroticized figure of Queen Gertrude, who serves as an analogue to Queen Elizabeth.

The event that has the greater impact on Hamlet is not that his uncle killed his father, but rather that his mother is now sharing the marital bed with his uncle. When first introduced, Hamlet gives the

appearance of being grief-stricken as he is adorned in mourning clothes; this is noted by Gertrude: “[G]ood Hamlet, cast they nighted color off/ [a]nd let thine eye look like a friend in Denmark” (I. ii. 68-9). However, when alone onstage, he immediately reveals all is not as it seems and that his grief has been displaced by anger towards his mother:

Fie on't, ah fie, tis an unweeded garden  
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature  
Possess it merely. That it should come to this!  
But two months dead—nay, not so much, not two.  
(I. ii. 135-8)

In this passage, the grief over his father's death is overlaid and supplanted by obsessive disgust over what has failed to die, here figured as the “unweeded garden” of Gertrude's sexual appetite.

Gertrude's sexual vitality is the source of Hamlet's lament. This is apparent in Hamlet's first soliloquy, even before he learns of the regicide:

Frailty thy name is woman!  
A little month, or ere those shoes were old  
With which she followed my poor father's body . . .  
Within a month, ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears  
Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,  
She married—O most wicked speed: to post  
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets,  
It is not, nor it cannot come to good. (I. ii. 146-59)

Hamlet's great cry of pain in this first soliloquy—as he muses on his mother's sexual insatiability and over-hasty remarriage—is the most important aspect of the scene. It reveals displacement of Hamlet's grief over his father's death by anger about his mother's sexuality. The ghost also alludes to Gertrude's shame when it tells Hamlet how Claudius had lured her to his bed:

Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,  
With witchcraft of his wits, with traitorous gifts—  
O wicked with and gifts that have the power  
So to seduce!—won to his shameful lust  
The will of my most seeming virtuous queen. (I. v. 42-6)

Here, the ghost refers to Gertrude as “my most seeming virtuous queen.” With the use of “seeming,” the ghost reveals that he is not truly convinced of Gertrude’s innocence and places further ill thoughts about Gertrude into Hamlet’s head. Hamlet can infer that Gertrude’s sexuality was a motive for Claudius’ actions and that had his mother not been so appealing to his uncle, his father would still be alive. This same idea of “seeming” is also evident throughout Elizabeth’s reign. She manipulates her sexuality and the fact that she is a woman to her advantage. She fashions herself as a “weak and feeble”<sup>13</sup> woman so skillfully that she literally has the lives of men at her disposal.

As this scene progresses, the ghost neglects his purpose to further digress upon Gertrude’s “lust,” her “lewdness,” and her taste for “garbage” (I. v. 54-6). It is “the scent of morning air” that reminds the ghost his time is short and he has yet to inform Hamlet of the details of Claudius’ crime. The ghost’s vengeful charge focuses not on the past crime of regicide, but rather the ongoing sexual transgression:

Let not the royal bed of Denmark be  
A couch for luxury and damned incest.  
But howsoever thou pursues this act,  
Taint not thy mind, no let thy soul contrive  
Against thy mother aught. Leave her to heaven,  
And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge  
To prick and sting her. (I. v. 82-8)

The ghost tells Hamlet not to seek vengeance on his mother, inadvertently fueling Hamlet’s misogynistic rant. It follows then that Hamlet’s initial response to what the ghost has just told him is prima-

rily a reflection on his mother rather than Claudius: "O most pernicious woman! / O villain, villain, smiling damned villain!" (I. v. 105). It is fascinating that Hamlet refers to his mother as the wicked one when it was his uncle who poisoned his father.

In Gertrude's chamber, Hamlet continues to bewail his mother's sensuality and lust, the motives for her marriage to his father's murderer:

O shame! Where is thy blush?  
 Rebellious hell...  
 ...Proclaim no shame  
 When the compulsive ardure gives the charge,  
 Since frost itself as actively doth burn,  
 And reason [panders] will. (III. iv. 81-4)

There are many intriguing aspects of this scene, as it takes place in Gertrude's closet. The closet should be a sacred place for a Renaissance woman, however it is subject to blasphemy in *Hamlet*. Gertrude's closet entertains several men, who are all competing for her personal attention. On different occasions, Hamlet further corrupts his mother's chamber by killing Polonius, who is hiding behind a curtain in the very room. Alongside the body of Polonius and the distressed person of her son, the physical attributes of two husbands are vividly conjured since the ghost appears where Claudius sleeps. In the innermost space of the erotic and potentially carnal, Hamlet's accusation—"O Shame, where is thy blush"—elicits the contrast between these two consorts. The excessiveness in this chamber is the presence of all these men, together with the withholding of a promise of emotional, or possibly erotic, satisfaction. Much action occurs in a location which ideally should be private. Furthermore, the audience witnesses Gertrude's promiscuous entertaining of too many men in her chamber and her reluctance to commit to her loyalties except under emotional duress.

Furthermore, the notion of incestuous behavior is also evident when Hamlet reproaches his mother in her bedchamber. He addresses her incestuous liaison with Claudius, and she at once tells him, "thou hast thy



father much offended" (III. iv. 9). Hamlet retorts, "Mother, you have my father much offended" (III. iv. 10). Hamlet then reinforces the confusion and corruption his mother's sexuality has caused by mixing and polluting his father's flesh and blood with his uncle's flesh when he tells her, "You are the queene, your Husbands Brothers wife, / But would you were not so, you are my mother" (I. 15-16). Hamlet means that he believes his father King Hamlet is still Gertrude's husband.

Hamlet cannot exorcise his thoughts that Gertrude embodies a passion that "canst mutine in a matron's bones" (III. iv. 83) and that she lives "in the rank of an enseamed bed, stew'd in corruption, honeying and making love over the nasty sty" (III. iv. 92-4). Sickened with his mother's actions, Hamlet refers to her as a pig living and "making love" amongst disgust, in an "enseamed bed, stew'd in corruption."

There are several other scenes in the play that also exemplify Hamlet's displaced obsession. For instance, during the player king and queen's prologue of the "mousetrap scene," Gertrude rather than Claudius is the center of Hamlet's attention:

Hamlet: Madam, how like you this play?

Gertrude: The lady doth protest too much, me thinks.

Hamlet: O but she'll keep her word. (III. ii. 229-30)

This part of the "play within a play" functions to capture the conscience of the queen rather than that of the king. Gertrude's transgression is not just against her first husband but also the laws of nature. Steven Mullaney argues that "what distracts Hamlet from his almost blunted purpose is Gertrude's aging sexuality, conceived at times as a contradiction in terms, at times as a violation of her own body akin in its unnaturalness to a rebellion in the body politic."<sup>14</sup> This correlates to Elizabeth in her old age in that by masking her age with cosmetics, Elizabeth is also defying the same laws of nature as Gertrude. Both queens, despite their age, are defying the norms of society by indulging in a sense of sexual vitality, whether by using cosmetics or hasty re-marriages.

Although an adulteress in Hamlet's mind, Gertrude may redeem herself if she avoids the marriage bed. Hamlet explicitly instructs his mother to reform herself in the shape of a virgin:

Mother, for love of grace...  
 That not your trespass but my madness speak...  
 Confess yourself to heaven,  
 Repent what's past, avoid what is to come,  
 And do not spread the compost on the weeds  
 To make them ranker...  
 O, throw away the worser part of it,  
 And [live] the purer with the other half.  
 Good night, but go not to my uncle's bed—  
 Assume a virtue, if you have it not...(III. iv. 114-60)

To allay Hamlet's misogynist suspicions and anxieties, in order to not be a whore, Gertrude must throw away the "worse part," here symbolized by her sexuality, and assume celibacy, an appropriate response to Hamlet's call for virtue. Hamlet desires his mother to cease her sexual life and reform to follow values which he esteems morally correct.

The audience pronounces Gertrude as guilty not as judgment on her actions but as a condition of her presence in the play in relation to Hamlet. There is not actual evidence that Gertrude is what Hamlet assumes her to be, both an adulteress and an accomplice to murder. If his judgment of his mother is based solely on a textual analysis of her lines, Gertrude is, presumably, innocent. Gertrude is guilty only of being oblivious to what occurs and displaying a sexual self in her old age. For instance, the play-within-the play elicits from Claudius the evidence Hamlet needs to confirm the ghost's report, but its effect upon Gertrude is, at best, superficial. The play irritates her because it offends her current husband, but the dramatization of regicide does not affect her at all. From her reaction, or rather lack of, it is obvious that she does not perceive the connection between the play and reality. Her innocence in King Hamlet's death is once again confirmed



when Hamlet levels the explicit charge of regicide—"almost as bad, good mother, / As kill a king, and marry with his brother" (III. iv. 29-30). Her astonishment at "kill a king" is so patently innocent that Hamlet never again suspects her of complicity in the crime.

The beginning of the play also reflects Gertrude's integrity when she tells Claudius she believes Hamlet's dissonance to be a result of "his father's death and our o'erhasty marriage" (II. ii. 56-7). Gertrude's innocence is further epitomized when she drinks the poisoned wine in Act V. ii. Claudius advises Gertrude: "do not drink" (l. 290); her unsuspecting reply is "I will my lord, I pray you pardon me" (l. 291). Claudius blames the blood spill for Gertrude's malady, however Hamlet is aware the drink is to blame as he claims "O villainy! Ho, let the door be lock'd! / Treachery! Seek it out" (l. 313). Hamlet realizes the queen's innocence when it is too late.

When faced with the impossibility of resolving the uncertainties of his father's death, Hamlet turns his attention upon his mother. Hamlet is perplexed as to how he could avenge his father; he therefore misplaces his anger onto his mother's sexuality and as a result becomes preoccupied with Gertrude's sexual vitality. This is a common theme in much Renaissance and especially Jacobean drama, where women become the focal point of all wrongdoing. The use of cosmetics was severely condemned by society since it was viewed as the work of the devil. In his *A Discourse Against the Painting and Tincturing of Women* (1616), Thomas Tuke articulates these "abominable sinnes of murther and poysoning, pride and ambition, adultery and witchcraft"<sup>15</sup> which are associated with the use of cosmetics. He also discusses the whorish and seductively evil attributes and character of a painted woman.

These harsh views on the use of cosmetics are rampant in early modern English society. When he comes to face a woman, Hamlet focuses not on her mind but the sins she has committed onto her body, "now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favor she must come" (V. I. 192-5). Hamlet delivers these lines during the graveyard scene towards the end of the play. This direct reference to cosmetics while in the graveyard gives

affirmation to the notion that women were seen as *momento mori* (reminders of death) while masked with their beautiful facades.

If women were to serve as reminders of man's mortality, it would stem back to Eve being the cause of all of man's woe. Therefore, it is no wonder women went to such great lengths to paint themselves "an inch thick," not only to appease the misogynistic society around them, but also, as in the case of Queen Elizabeth I, to confirm their own power.



Notes

1. Shirley Nelson Garner, "‘Let Her Paint an Inch Thick:’ Painted Ladies in Renaissance Drama and Society," *Renaissance Drama* (1989): 133.
2. Russ McDonald, ed., *The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare*, 2d ed. (Boston: Bedford, 2001), 19.
3. Leonard Tennenhouse, *Power on Display: The Politics of Shakespeare’s Genre* (New York: Methuen, 1986), 85.
4. Peter Erickson, *Rewriting Shakespeare, Rewriting Ourselves* (Berkeley: University of California, Berkely Press, 1998), 83–86.
5. Isaac Oliver. "Rainbow Portrait" (1600). In the collection of the Marquess of Salisbury, Hatfield House.
6. Elizabeth Pomeroy, *Reading the Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1989), 65.
7. Francis Bacon, *In Felicium Memoriam Elizabethae: The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. James Speeding (Boston: 1860), 447.
8. Pomeroy, 70.
9. André Hurault, Sieur de Maisse, *Journal*. Edited by G.B. Harrison and R.A. Jones (Bloomsburg: 1931), 82.
10. Marie Axton, *The Queen’s Two Bodies: Drama and the Elizabethan Succession* (London: Meuthen, 1977), 26.
11. Hurault, 84.
12. Louis Adrian Montrose, "‘Shaping Fantasies’: Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture," *Representations* 44, no. 2 (1983), 64.
13. Elizabeth I, Queen of England, "Speech to the Troops at Tilbury" (1588), *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*. Edited by Leah A. Marcus, et. al (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 326.

14. Steven Mullaney, "Mourning and Misogyny: Hamlet, The Revenger's Tragedy, and The Final Progress of Elizabeth I 1600–1607," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 45 (1994), 151.

15. Thomas Tuke, *A Discourse on the Tincturing and Painting of Women* (London, 1615).

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# House

We gutted you, boxed you,  
threw out your insides. You,  
with your mispainted walls,  
your stretches of cobwebs for breath,

those twisting lines of gifts and photographs,  
I found the locket, the drawings.  
Picture after picture of me playing  
in the waves, waving in play.

We found your evidence and piled it away.  
We tore you apart. All of you:  
The rooms we lived in, the roof I sat on.  
The grass I died on one winter night

when your trees tried to catch me.  
All of this. It pours out of you like seeds  
and still it keeps coming.  
We empty all of it, even

the nights I walked your path  
in the cold, reciting  
Panzer-man, panzer-man, O you—  
to keep me warm. And it does,



even now, even though you are purged  
of our tings, of us, of our hold on you.

*by Laura Walter*

## Borderline

Talked to her on the phone today  
about our traveling next summer

over red-rusted canyons,  
the block-states, the West Coast.

I can picture us in the car,  
feet to dashboard, breasts

locked under seat belts,  
sun in our hair.

And I think I know what music  
will drive us to where

we will try to go.  
It will be something flirty,

something female—a tune  
light enough to catch itself

in her flowing skirt  
that opens to the breeze.

We must learn that  
the borderlines call to us

because they are permanent,  
and because we are young,

and moving, and heading somewhere fast.

*by Laura Walter*

# To Beat the Waves

He stripped to underwear,  
dove into the ocean froth  
and came up heavy-breathing  
and wet, and it was so dark I

could only see the moon on his back;  
I felt him move from somewhere inside.  
(The silver ocean shooting itself  
onto the shoreline, pausing, pulling back.)

The sand in my skin, the salt of his mouth,  
and when we sat up we saw the horizon  
was lightening into blue, and then  
pairs of people appeared all over the beach:

Lines of lovers moving to the horizon, blue against black,  
running into the ocean and dashing back to  
beat the waves, to catch themselves dry  
on the shoreline: tumbling into the sand

like salt foam rolling over itself,  
wave after wave.

*by Laura Walter*



# The Measure of a Man



*Elizabeth Mumford*

With advances in genetics and the decryption of the human genome, many people are taking the time to sit back and ponder the questions of what humanity is and where it comes from.<sup>1</sup> Will techniques such as gene therapy eventually create people who aren't quite human? If humanity is a flexible and ever-changing concept, then how do people know if they are human? Does some standard measure of humanity seem likely in our future, and is it even ethically proper to impose such a standard?

Philosophy offers the most satisfying definition of humanity: a human person is a conscious individual who interacts with an outside world. The details of the various philosophical debates on the exact nature of personhood would be enough to fill a library, but the main ideas can be summarized as follows: a person is self-aware, having the ability to think about thinking. Nothing in this definition of humanity involves matters of genetics or quantitative analyses of specific traits, which makes this definition applicable to people who may not be human in the way science tries to define the term.

Defining humanity in a scientific sense, however, is a nettled endeavor. Many "strictly human" traits can be found in animals. Wolves have a complex social structure. Bonobos, a subspecies of chimpanzee, can learn an abstract symbol-language and show the ability to understand grammar and syntax.<sup>2</sup> In other experiments dolphins—

who are genetically more distant from humans than bonobos—learned a type of sign language showing that they, too, are able to grasp complex rules of language.<sup>3</sup> One only has to yell at the family dog to see that animals can express emotion and empathy. What, then, is left to humans?

Many point to our advanced technology as proof of our uniqueness, but it is well known that chimpanzees use tools on a regular basis. The only difference in this instance is that chimpanzees don't need to have very many advanced tools—they are more suited to their environment than the researchers who must carry around thirty pounds of gear to study them.

Despite evidence to the contrary, many people still cling to the belief that humans are somehow superior to all other organisms—this innate superiority being the essence of humanity. Humans are, after all, the most successful large animals on the planet, having spread to every continent and taken control of the ecosystems there. However, it could be argued that certain kinds of bacteria are more highly evolved than people—their genomes do not contain long stretches of “junk DNA” and their genes are organized into related groups more efficiently than the genes of most eukaryotes, like humans.<sup>4</sup>

The fallacy in the idea of human superiority is that most people assume that evolution is some sort of race: organisms compete with each other to be the most successful species of all, an “ultimate organism.” “Evolution has no pinnacle and there is no such thing as evolutionary process.”<sup>5</sup> The truth of the matter is that there is no over-arching competition being held; creatures simply change to be better suited to their environment. Humans are not necessarily on the top of the heap—humanity just happens to have the advantage over other large animals. One only needs to look at the cockroach to see the same evolutionary success.

Intelligence is cited by many as the main defining characteristic of humans: humanity is somehow rooted in the ability to solve problems and manipulate concepts in the mind. Unfortunately, intelligence is also extremely hard to define and quantify reliably. Many,



early IQ tests were biased so that people with western, middle-class values scored highest.<sup>6</sup> The more recently revised IQ tests do not accurately measure a person's full intelligence, since intelligence can be described on a variety of scales and some people do better in some areas than others—leading many psychologists to accept a theory of multiple intelligences.<sup>7</sup> If a concept as clear-cut as intelligence cannot be measured by science, a philosophically nebulous concept such as humanity is equally unmeasurable.

Many theologians would argue that the defining characteristic of humans is their possession of a soul. In 1996, the Catholic Church was able to reconcile evolutionary theory with church doctrine by arguing that at some point, called the “ontological discontinuity,” God injected a soul into the ape lineage and thus created man.<sup>8</sup> Is the soul some sort of physical process or hidden gene? There is no real evidence to support this. The only major genetic difference between humans and primates is the fusion of two smaller ape chromosomes into our chromosome two.<sup>9</sup>

Chimpanzees share at least 98 percent of our genes (estimates vary). Could a soul lie in that measly two percent? Again, philosophy and theology, not science, are the forerunners in defining humanity. Psychologists regularly use animal models to test mental processes that occur in humans. Neurologically speaking, our thought processes are nothing special, and human consciousness has yet to be satisfactorily explained by science. If human thought is basically the same as animal thought, then how can a 2 percent change in the genetic code between humans and their closest animal cousins account for culture, the arts, and science?

What, then, can be measured as a determining factor of humanity? Scientifically speaking, there are no real hallmarks to humanity—nothing that can be definitively quantified. The closest definition of humanity is religious or philosophical, not genetic. People must figure out for themselves if they are human or not, and perhaps this is a good thing. Self-awareness is currently the only hallmark of humanity, something that all people are demonstrated to have. Should

humanity ever become a known quantity, what would happen to the inevitable exceptions to the rule? Many such thought-experiments are carried out in science fiction, but there are plenty of dilemmas in current real life to illustrate this problem.

As genetic engineering advances, there will inevitably be changes in the human genome. For good or ill, gene therapy could eliminate certain unfavorable traits from the genome forever. Could the recipients of gene therapy be considered less human because of the artificial changes in their genes? What about people who have a genetic disorder yet cannot afford genetic alterations? The number of chromosomes a species possesses is one of the few hard-and-fast genetic measures of identity, but people with Down's syndrome have one more chromosome than most people. Does that make them some other species and therefore not human?

Scientifically, the only real distinguishing characteristic of humanity is that we all belong to the species *Homo sapiens*. However, even the idea of species is nebulous. The most popular definition of a species is called the biological species concept, which states that a species is "a population or group of populations whose members have the potential to interbreed with one another in nature to produce viable, fertile offspring, but who cannot produce viable, fertile offspring with members of other species."<sup>10</sup> At first this seems like an acceptable definition—you can't breed housecats with tigers, let alone get offspring, but you can breed housecats with other housecats.

On second thought, though, there are problems with this definition of a species. A Chihuahua and a Great Dane are both members of the species *Canis familiaris*, the domestic dog, but it is impossible for the two breeds to reproduce with one another without intervention, by taking the operation out of nature and using techniques like artificial insemination. When left alone, a dog as small as a Chihuahua simply cannot mate with a dog as big as a Great Dane. Does this make Chihuahuas and Great Danes members of separate species? What about infertile couples, who cannot have children of their own, or

cultures who do not intermarry outside of their own group? Does this make them a separate species? The answer is no, but if science cannot clearly define taxonomy, how can it seriously address more complex issue of humanity?

Ethically, anyone confirming substantially to the current nebulous ideal of humanity is considered human with all the rights and privileges thereof. If there were a score or a standard, the result of any scientific measure of humanity, then would people who would otherwise be defined as human become sub-human or super-human? Humanity itself could become stratified into classes just as economic status is, with all the resulting prejudices. Ethically speaking, a scientific measure of humanity could easily cause more harm than good—a situation such as the Holocaust, in which millions of people were killed because they didn't measure up, could happen all over again.

This theme is treated often in science fiction. In the movie *Gattaca* genetic engineering had advanced to the point that parents could select all the qualities their children would have. Anyone born with a genetic defect was then relegated to the fringe of society to serve the more perfect members of their race. Historically, this sort of stratification took place all over the Western world, as Europeans and Americans subjugated peoples from cultures considered less human. The flip side of the issue is presented in the comic book series *The Uncanny X-Men* (in its various incarnations). In the series, an average human society persecutes the genetically superior human mutants because it fears their power (though with just cause; certain groups of mutants occasionally try to subjugate the relatively defenseless masses). In both of these fictional case studies, rampant prejudice forced people who did not live up to a certain quantified definition of humanity to live in perpetual servitude or fight for their lives.

In conclusion, a genetic definition of humanity will probably never be found since humanity itself is a nebulous concept that is subject to change according to culture and time period. This, of course, will not

stop science from searching. However, in the ethical larger picture, searching for the scientific root of humanity may not be as good an idea as originally thought. As Ian Malcom put it in the movie *Jurassic Park*, "They were so preoccupied with whether or not they could, they didn't stop to think if they should."



### Notes

1. This paper was originally written for Professor Rosemary Ford's CNW course, "Human Genetics, Society, and Ethics," held at Washington College, Chestertown, Maryland.
2. Robert A. Baron, *Psychology* 5th ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000).
3. Baron.
4. N. A. Campbell, J. B. Reece, and L. G. Mitchell, *Biology* 5th ed., (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1999).
5. Matt Ridley, *Genome: The Autobiography of a Species in 23 Chapters* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1999) 24.
6. Ibid.
7. Baron.
8. Ridley, 24.
9. Ibid.
10. Campbell et al., 446.

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# Redefining the American Identity: A Student Conference on Ethnic Diversity

SELECTED PAPERS



We are pleased to present several papers that Washington College students gave at the student research conference sponsored by Washington College and Goucher College on March 28, 2002 on our campus. Inspired by the tragedy of September 11, 2001, the conference served as a forum for the discussion and exploration of issues that celebrate or challenge the diversity of the United States and the unifying forces of democracy that hold our nation together. As evidenced by the subsequent events—the terrorist attacks, the backlash against Arab-Americans, the rallying of national pride and identity—one characteristic of America that is unique and that should be a source of strength and pride is its diverse communities.

This student research conference, a first in the College's history, was organized by Professor Bonnie Ryan, Jesse Ball Dupont Minority Scholar and Lecturer in Anthropology. Professor Ryan is currently Associate Director of Washington College's African American Archaeology Project and Field Director of the Field School in Archaeology. With others, she is investigating Harriet Tubman's birthplace in Bucktown, Maryland. Professor Leslie Brown, Jesse Ball Dupont Minority Scholar at Goucher Scholar assisted.

A number of other Washington College professors helped to organize the conference and choose the papers to be presented: Donald McColl (Art), Tahir Shad (Political Science), Jeanette Sherbondy (Anthropology), Ruth Shoge (Librarian), Janet Sorrentino (History), and Ted Widmer (Center for the Study of the American Experience). Melissa Deckman (Political Science), Jacquelyn Jones (English), and Leah Newell (Director of International Students and Programs) also collaborated.

Opening the conference with a keynote address Dr. Seble Dawit, Director of Peace Studies at Goucher College, strongly urged everyone to work for conflict resolution locally and throughout the world. Twelve Washington College students were the presenters in two sessions. In this volume of the Washington College Review we publish the papers that William Smiley, Emanuel Simmons, and Yukiko Omagari presented in the first session, titled "Where Self-Identity and National Identity Meet: Looking at Solutions to Conflict," and the papers that Justin Mills and Paula Persoleo gave in the second session, "El Pluribus Unum: Making It Work." They are printed here in the same order in which they were given in the conference, from William Smiley's wry commentary and Emanuel Simmons' emotional cry to Yukiko Omagari's plan for solving global conflict in the first session, and in the second session from Justin Mills' thoughtful comments on identity to Paula Persoleo's ethnographic take on events.

Jeanette E. Sherbondy  
Editor



## How and Why Americans Hurt: Examining the Effects of September 11



*William Smiley*

I have a confession to make: September 11, I sat for hours in front of my television set. Numbed by the sights and sounds of the crying and the bleeding, I could only sit and blankly stare as figures emerged from the clouds of smoke, dust, and ash. Of course, at the time, I hadn't realized—the ash, that is. I hadn't realized that the survivors were actually covered in the ashes of those not so fortunate to escape. Survivors. The American people were all trying to survive. But, somehow, we were all victims as well. And perhaps my ignorance was intentional, some sort of emergency defense mechanism that either could not or would not accept reality. Honestly, it was all so unreal.

Yet this seems like no great confession. I am sure that much of the nation and world can recall such morbid captivation combined with disbelief. Actually, my true confession might seem rather mundane. Still, I must reveal that President George W. Bush was the first person to dispel my willing disillusionment—he was the first commentator to impress upon me the stark reality of all that happened. On the night of September 11, the commander in chief addressed a nation, a changed nation, that suddenly knew fear:

Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts. The victims were in airplanes or in their offices: secretaries, businessmen and women, military and federal workers, moms and dads, friends and neighbors. Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil, despicable acts of terror.<sup>1</sup>

I believe that Bush's speech made such an impression on me because both his voice and demeanor were tinged with a deeply unsettling quality uncharacteristic of the Texan president. After all, prior to September 11, Bush was largely reduced to a sort of caricature. He was forced to suffer the cruel irony that some of his most outspoken "supporters" were late night talk show hosts who quipped that they would never be out of jobs as long as he was in office. But on the night of September 11, the curtain fell on these comedy routines. The president had been transformed; his words carried a newfound sense of authority that truly put into perspective the threat that the United States was facing. No one was laughing. Although Bush's words were still plain and few, they were nonetheless chosen very carefully. And so, despite his poor track record, our president ultimately set the tone for a country mired in confusion, on the verge of panic, and at war.

#### WHAT IS AN AMERICAN?

In the wake of September 11, many American citizens wanted answers, they wanted action. Helplessness, it seems, did not suit our country well. At the time, I was merely swept along by the many news headlines and interruptions to my regularly scheduled programs.

In retrospect, I must admit that the Bush Administration's response demonstrated how firmly its fingers were pressed to the pulse of the American people. Specifically, the president voiced the nation's concerns by addressing the questions that must have been on our

minds: Why do Arabs hate us? How will we fight and win this war? What is expected of the ordinary citizen?<sup>2</sup> Yet, despite his volley of answers, did the president really address the deeply emotional response that most citizens of the United States were, and possibly still are, experiencing?

Gwen, a woman in her mid-thirties living on Maryland's Eastern Shore, attempted to capture that experience:

I think most Americans felt violated by what happened. We have been insulated from the kind of violence that most of the rest of the world lives with every day. I think that for me, living here in this quiet little town, even though we're only an hour and twenty minutes from Washington, I wake up every morning and I'm grateful that I live in a place where I don't lock my door at night. I feel totally insulated from most of the violence and terrorism in the world. And that's probably not a healthy attitude to have.

And so, it appears that the fundamental senses of shock and confusion that most Americans shared could be rooted in a common national identity. From what Gwen has said, one can derive that for quite some time now we've mistakenly believed that safety is a constant in our lives. And we didn't just believe. We knew. We knew that we were safe in our homes and in our streets, we knew that living in fear was something that the rest of the world would go to sleep with at night. But never us. We knew. So it seems that, at best, we had become complacent.

There is nothing that we've believed in more than our own invincibility. In fact, the immensity of so-called western society has virtually evaporated from our imaginations; its theoretical boundaries have been whittled away so that only the United States remains as some idealized pinnacle of civilization. With such principles at the root of the American identity, no wonder our hearts fell while our arms and voices rose.

Given the nearly self-righteous attitude that Americans possess, television audiences quickly realized the symbolic significance of the September 11 attacks. Surely, our trust in our own permanence and indestructibility was no better demonstrated than in the live reports from the Pentagon building. News broadcasters were convinced that there was no serious structural damage to our center of defense and intelligence; it could not have possibly amounted to more than a little smoke and flames confined to the building's exterior. But as the day wore on, the nation was stunned to discover that the explosion actually tore into this supposed superstructure, severely damaging our national identity in the process. In short, Americans have always taken for granted the impenetrability of the Pentagon; we never questioned the absolute security it represents. Gwen encapsulates the resulting change in herself as an American:

To be American means one word: freedom. Freedom from harm, freedom to express myself, freedom in moving about the world. As an American, [before September 11] I felt I could go anywhere and do anything. That's changing. I wouldn't go to the Middle East for all the money in the world. I'm inclined to say that I wouldn't go beyond an English-speaking country. You risk taking your life in your own hands.

#### WAR IN BLACK AND WHITE

To go anywhere and do anything. As Americans, we have long felt that our lives are so great because they are so unrestricted. Now, we begin to wonder. Our power had remained unchallenged for so long, we could scarcely believe, or even begin to comprehend, the sounds and images from ground zero. It was unreal. It couldn't happen. At least, not in America. President Bush echoed these sentiments in his address:

On September 11, enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country. Americans have known wars, but for the past 136 years, they have been wars on foreign soil, except for one Sunday in 1941. Americans have known the casualties of war, but not at the center of a great city on a peaceful morning. Americans have known surprise attacks, but never before on thousands of civilians. All of this was brought upon us in a single day, and night fell on a different world, a world where freedom itself is under attack.<sup>3</sup>

Admittedly, as a rallying point, this was a brilliant move. The president consistently placed his political persona to the side and appeared before his people as a human being. The result: the masses could quickly relate to this man in Washington, D. C., and they offered their heartfelt support. Nevertheless, Pam, a twenty-year-old college student, objects to this tactic:

Well, what are we? We aren't any saints. I mean, I didn't do anything to that person in Afghanistan, but my government did. There's families over there. There's little kids and their mothers...I'm not justifying their actions, killing thousands of people, but we've killed people too. We've had people assassinated, we've taken control of their ways of life, and I think they were just tired of it and retaliated. I don't think it was right, but I think they had every reason to do it.

Unfortunately, Pam's voice rises from among the significant minority. She argues that the president's attitude boils away the finer details so that only the black and white scraps remain. Such an oversimplification victimizes the United States when, in all honesty, we lost our innocence long ago. Yet the sad fact remains that much of the American people, like their president, view the United States through blinders, seeing it only as a venerable and virtuous nation.

During the State of the Union address, Bush coined the term “axis of evil” by carelessly lumping Iraq, Iran, and North Korea together as one concrete threat. Rhetorically speaking, the term skews the facts and convolutes the war into an epic struggle of good versus evil. But more importantly, an axis of evil conjures a common enemy in the mind of the nation. It is a psychological ploy that reinforces our ideas of who we are as Americans, giving us a sense of unity and purpose. Never mind that the axis of evil was a deliberate manipulation of truth, a mere invention of Bush’s speechwriters.

Certainly, the President overlooked the fact that Iraq and Iran were at war for nearly a decade. Yes, he simply forgot that in no way are they joined in an alliance of any sort. Moreover, administrators admit that North Korea has been out of the terrorism business since the eighties and that it only remains on the State Department’s list of nations sponsoring terrorism as a matter of diplomatic pressure. Granted, they all have markets for missiles, but terrorists’ interests are elsewhere, primarily on biological and nuclear entities.<sup>4</sup> In the harsh light of truth, Bush was essentially exploiting a threat that does not currently exist. There was no real reason to believe that these three countries were operating in tandem or that they needed a warning of any kind. Bush’s accusation only fanned the flames of hostility.

#### SHADES OF AN ETHNIC IDENTITY

Throughout my discussion, I have invariably mentioned the concept of national identity in the United States. Interestingly, it seems that much of the president’s energy has been directed toward reassuring Americans that we all are indeed united: “America counts millions of Muslims amongst our citizens, and Muslims make an incredibly valuable contribution to our country...In our anger and emotion, our fellow Americans must treat each other with respect.”<sup>5</sup> The importance of being American unravels with the realization that “a name serves as a rallying point, and a tan-



gible one, around which an identity can be rebuilt.”<sup>6</sup> In this case, President Bush points out that although United States citizens are superficially divided into categories such as those designated by race and religion, we can all still call ourselves Americans. Now, let us not forget Royce’s statement that “names of ethnic categories...provide individuals with something to invoke when they have no other immediate indicators of ethnic identity.”<sup>7</sup> Therefore, we seem to have the proposal that to be American is to belong to a distinct ethnic group.

Obviously, a name alone is not enough to convincingly argue that there exists an American ethnicity. But Royce elaborates on the matter by drawing from Isajiw’s subjective approach, which claims that ethnicity is a process by which individuals are identified from either within or without as being different from others or belonging to a different group.<sup>8</sup> Basically, Americans are simply what we make of ourselves and what others perceive us as. “An ethnic group consists of people who conceive of themselves as being of a kind. They are united by emotional bonds and concerned with the preservation of their type. With very few exceptions they speak the same language...and they share a common cultural heritage.”<sup>9</sup> With this information, we can begin to understand the sentiments of shock and fear that nearly all Americans felt as emotional links that preserve a common ethnic identity. Bush’s efforts to reinforce American national unity can therefore be perceived as his attempt to exploit the fact that “ethnic groups are simply another kind of reference group that individuals may choose to invoke, ignore, or oscillate between depending on their perception of the situation.”<sup>10</sup>

## CONCLUSION

We might take the road of the idealist, we might call on humankind to join hands and work toward a mutual understanding of our differences. Yet, such wide-eyed optimism seems utopian and unre-

alistic. Can we truly expect that every nation of the world would lay down its weapons and commit to such a gesture of peace? I wish that I might recover my childhood naiveté and cling to the belief that the problems of war might be resolved if only we all wanted it enough.

However, I must remind myself that I abandoned the unreal, the disillusionment, with the passing of September 11 and that this generation has grown past its age of innocence. Of course, this is not to say that there is no hope, only that we must consider practical alternatives. Instead, I think that an American ethnicity might disperse the cloud of senseless violence by bringing the events of September 11 into a more meaningful focus. But is an American ethnic group a reality? Maybe. The convenience of ethnicity lies in its intangibility, the fact that it is merely a product of our desire to belong and relate to some order larger than ourselves. After all, ethnicity means unity.

On the dark side of humanity, we have seen that inclusion becomes grounds for exclusion, and exclusion grounds for hatred and fear. On the other hand, a glimmer of the idealist reminds us that to link nationality with ethnicity requires cultural ownership of our actions.

Rather than think of our government as some removed entity in Washington, D.C., we would recognize that it is intrinsically a part of who we are as American people. As a result, the American public could no longer think of itself as an innocent bystander, leaving its government the blame. On the contrary, we would be forced to shoulder the weight of each of our government's international exploits because our identity itself would be at stake. Certainly, the government is not some body of strangers; the government is the voice of the people, our representative. With an American ethnicity, any move this country makes will directly reflect on the character of its people. Gradually, we will realize that with national pride we must necessarily accept national disappointment.



Ultimately, American ethnicity places the choice between pride and disappointment in the hands of the people, thereby giving us all the opportunity to set the course of our cultural destiny. At the very least, our own dignity might save us.



Notes

1. President, Address, "Address to the Nation," (2001) <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/print/20010911-16.html>> (27 February 2002).
2. President, Address, "President Declares 'Freedom at War with Fear,'" <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/print/20010920-8.html>> (27 February 2002).
3. President, Address, "Address to the Nation."
4. "The axis of evil: Is it for real?" *Time*, 11 February 2002, 30.
5. President, Statement, "Islam is Peace," <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/print/20010917-11.html>> (27 February 2002).
6. Anya Peterson Royce. *Ethnic Identity: Strategies of Diversity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 27.
7. Ibid.
8. Wsevolod, Isajiw. "Definitions of Ethnicity," *Ethnicity* 1, (1974) 115.
9. Tamatsu Shibutani and Kian M. Kwan, *Ethnic Stratification* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 40-41.
10. Royce, 24.

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# A Needle in the Haystack



*Emanuel Lynwood Simmons*

America: the home of the brave and the free, the “melting pot.” America: a society of endless possibilities and promises. We as Americans have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Or do we? On what do these rights depend? Power? Power is the ability to influence another’s mind. Though expressed in many ways, power is not always accessible. One’s social, economic, ethical, and racial status determine how much power one can have—the cultural majority has the power. In American society, culture plays a pivotal role in our everyday life and experiences. What happens when one’s identity or sense of self is lost in the melting pot?

Who I am and what race or culture I belonged to never seemed to be an issue until I came to Washington College—everyone around me was the same race and belongs to the same culture it never seems to be an issue. More and more, as I roam this campus, I find myself asking the same questions: do I belong here? Is this the place for me? Who am I? I always come to the same conclusions: I’m me, Emanuel Simmons, the same person who came as a freshman but with more knowledge now. I ask myself, “Who was Emanuel Simmons as a freshman?” and I realize that to figure out where I belong, I must first figure out who I am.

Washington College is a fine institution of learning with a great deal of promise. When I first arrived at Washington College I was caught off guard. I was an eighteen-year-old, young black man coming from a big-time city to a small town. I had my share of trouble, and I was a little naïve but not innocent. I was in college, away from family and friends and on my own; nothing could stop me now. I was on top of the world, floating like a free balloon. Who knew that I was about to face a reality so strong that I might not make it out?

So eager to get out and meet people and make new friends, I was quick to just go walking and roaming around this beautiful campus. As I came in contact with people I would speak: “hey, how you doing” or “what’s up?”—but I’d get little or no response smile. This didn’t seem to bother me at first, for I was a new face and no one knew who I was. Anyway, time would change that soon; everyone would know my name, I thought, and be happy to speak. Little did I suspect, it wasn’t that they didn’t know who I was; it was that they didn’t care to know who I was! Time went on and it seemed as though I rarely saw a black face, but I shook it off—maybe they stayed in doing work. Unknown to me, there were only a few blacks here, and half of them didn’t like each other. So here I was, Emanuel Simmons, this city boy with high hopes of coming to college and taking everyone by storm with excellent grades and great potential. They would never know what hit them. Still naïve and speaking to everyone who crossed my path, I knew this was the place for me. It was quiet, relaxed, and I had lots of time to spend on my studies, with no distractions. I was eager for everyone to find out who I was because I just knew they would like me and I would make so many friends. Who would have thought that they would look at me as “Emanuel, the black guy” not “Emanuel the person?” It didn’t matter who I was as an individual, people had made up their minds before they met me; they wanted nothing to do with my ethnicity, my race, or me.

Time passed, and it became very apparent that we as blacks are underrepresented and badly stigmatized on this campus. I talked with several black students on campus about the atmosphere and tension

they see among the different ethnic groups. One twenty-one-year-old black student said, "Coming from a big city to a small town isn't easy. It's a big adjustment that you must be physically and mentally ready for." So tell me about yourself. She shouted out with built up frustration, "Double minority that's who I am, a black woman in a white man's society." Racism is always an issue at white institutions of higher learning.

Here on campus, black people find themselves representing their entire race instead of who they are as a person. It is racist and ridiculous for people to think that when a black person does something, it is not on an individual basis, but rather as a representative of blacks as a whole. It is very presumptuous for people to believe that we all act the same way, when really we don't. Being in the minority is already hard, but it is made worse when people begin to stare or go out their own way to be malicious and unkind. Another girl told me, "It hurts when several white students approach you and ask why do all the black students sit together at the dining hall, knowing the only reason they asked you that is because of your skin color." Black people share a common bond, whether we choose to accept it or not. When people see us, they don't just see that man or woman, they see that black man or black woman. They see our skin color and race. They sometimes fail to realize that we as people are individuals and we come from diverse backgrounds. When all the white students sit together are they asked why? No, because it is implicitly understood that they have a common bond or interest beyond their skin color. They either play sports together or participate in some other organization together or hang out as friends. Why can't we be friends because we like each other?

In class you rarely find racial diversity—there might be one or two black students in any given class; there are never more than five at once. This becomes a problem when topics such as social inequality, race, gender, class, and racial profiling are discussed. People automatically turn their heads or attention to the black person(s). This problem can be fixed with more minority incentives to attract more

minority students. Sometimes just a little extra effort can go a long way. When discussing issues of race and slavery, we as blacks sometimes don't know as much as everyone else; additional attention doesn't make us suddenly know more. We are students too, and we are here to learn like everyone else. As though racism were not a sensitive subject anyway, one girl told me a student went as far as saying he didn't see anything wrong with stopping black males on the road who looked a certain way or drove a certain car if it was stopping the drug traffic. Unfortunately it is not stopping the drug traffic, it is stopping black males. One girl replied, "It makes me so mad when people believe in things like that because if there is one who believes it, there is another."

On this campus there is nothing but built up tension among the "races." The blacks fight for recognition; the effort is akin to taking an extra class. We have to defend our reasons for wanting to have parties and our choice of whom to invite. Everything we earn on this campus, you better believe we fought hard for, because nothing is given to us here. The constant reminder that we are black and we are at a disadvantage is at times distracting. It's so hard to feel like you are a part of something if everything that is planned seems to exclude you in some type of way. Every week a few other black students and I go home because there is nothing to do on this campus that corresponds to our interests or tastes. We feel as though we are left out. There should be something planned every week that is inclusive of all, not just the majority. Even when the black organizations on campus sponsor events, there is little to no support from the Washington College community. This makes us feel as though we don't belong to the Washington College family. We see the enormous turnout at other events and support for other organizations and we ask ourselves, "Why? What did we do wrong?" The same answer again and again: it's not us, it's everyone else.

To solve this problem, we must first think of every student at Washington College as part of a big family. When members of your family are not happy, you try to find out why or try to find ways you



can help them. If we at Washington College can begin to treat each other as members of the same family, maybe we will begin to treat each other with some respect. Respect breeds dedication, loyalty, and friendship.

In talking with several other black students, we determined one of the problems at Washington College is that most people seem to equate the word "black" with being bad. If your perception is negative, how can we ever work together? We must first dispel all stereotypes on both sides, then we must keep the lines of communication open. Sometimes simple lack of communication adds to the confusion.

On this campus if your ethnicity is different from the majority, they think of you, and sometimes treat you as less of a person. Your personal needs differ from the needs of those in power, so they think yours don't really matter. A girl said, "It's as though we don't really exist on this campus." I asked, "What do you mean by that?" She said, "Look at everything that goes on at this school. First, there are no black male professors, a couple black female professors, and no black person on the senior administration. How can we expect to get anything accomplished at this school if the administration won't show a commitment to minority staff workers?" Yes, at Washington we talk a good game—diversity this, diversity that—but it would seem to me that a school that prides itself in excellent international relations would at least want a few more blacks on its payroll.

Here at Washington College you lose every sense of "self." You become another person—a person who has to defend his race in every conversation. Watch what you do and say because there are constant stares or looks criticizing your behavior. You can't act like a regular student because here is someone there to remind you of all your faults and failures. It can be difficult at times, trying to identify self here, because you know no matter how you look at yourself, everyone else will look at you differently and see something else. So you go through college life miserably, trying to please everyone but yourself.

I talked with one of the black girls here, and this is what she had to say: "Washington College, I hate it I hate it I hate it!" I asked, "Why?" "We as blacks are not treated equal on this campus; we are looked at as a race of people who are just bad by nature." "Give me an example," I said. She replied "Last week in the Elm I read the Public Safety report. It read, 'Suspicious black guy walked into the wrong suite.' What makes this black guy suspicious? Is it because of what he was wearing, which they didn't say, so it must have not been that, or because he was black? Why couldn't the man just make a mistake and walk in the wrong room? Why was this man considered suspicious? Think for a minute if, the same thing was reversed, would that white guy even be in the Public Safety report? I think not. If you can truly say yes, that he would've, then there is no problem, but if this minor example bothers you, you're thinking like many of the blacks on campus."

I think this is a good example of how many Washington College students think and act. One black guy entered a room assuming it was his friend's and was reported to Public Safety. If no questions come to mind—what did he do or say to make him appear guilty?—then you are as equally to blame as everyone else. I think and think and come up with this: this black man did nothing and said nothing to indicate ulterior motives. I don't know the whole story, and probably never will, but I know as a black male, I have been mistaken for just a black male, and not a College student. This is the worst feeling ever. You work your whole life to get you where you are now and you have people who are afraid of you because of your skin color. This is ridiculous! How can you ever be comfortable with yourself if every time you walk down the Cater Walk people move to the other side in disgrace or fear? That can drive a person insane wondering why these people don't like you or why they consider you a threat, when you're the best person ever.

It comes down to this: people tend to dislike or fear what they know nothing about. So with lack of knowledge comes suspicion. I'm not saying that all Washington College students act this way, but

a few mess it up for everyone else. If we as individuals take responsibility for our actions, maybe we would be held accountable for our actions and not everyone else's. In this world we all would like to think we know who we are, but it is only when we come in contact with others of different backgrounds that our sense of self is heightened. We tend to define ourselves as "us and them" rather than "us all." It is so much easier to categorize each other than to learn about each other. We must work together as a community to strengthen each other's weaknesses and let our individuality shine through. Then and only then will we be able to respect and embrace one's differences. We all belong to the same race, humankind. So let's start acting like it.





## Conflict Resolution: Individual Effort and Identity



*Yukiko Omagari*

Since the beginning of the new millennium, the whole world has been seeking world peace harder than ever before. Ironically though, the world today has also seen tragic wars and conflicts that have the capability to destroy mankind. Possession of nuclear weapons, indiscriminate attacks against innocents, and abuse of human rights are the realities that we should not turn our back on but instead face up to. Strong individual, ethnic, and national identities sometimes lead to conflicts because they are entities which drive humans to become self-seeking, disrespectful, and often exclusionary. However, the process of becoming aware of individual identity also can result in the solution of international conflicts between people of different cultures and ethnicities. This happens because in the process of understanding who you are, you are also able to appreciate other people's identities. Hence, it is important for every single person, whatever culture or philosophy he or she possesses, to believe that an effort made by an individual can directly solve future conflicts between people, no matter what their ethnic differences.

One must understand conflicts to solve them. It is important to consider what they are, why they are, what characteristics they have, and how they can be categorized. Conflicts are natural among humans; people desire to protect their local society or, in the present,

the international community. In fact, a conflict that maintains or eventually reunifies national identity is an advantage for human society.<sup>1</sup> Immanuel Kant, an Enlightenment philosopher of the eighteenth century who strongly believed in international cooperation and peace, even stated, "All wars are so many attempts to bring about new relations among the states and to form new bodies...there is created a state that civic commonwealth can maintain itself automatically."<sup>2</sup> In the same way, confrontation within a society sometimes has positive consequences. During the Civil Rights movement in the United States in the 1960s, African Americans were determined to draw a line between white people and themselves recognize themselves as an independent and equal entity. They suffered severe conflict to achieve this goal.

Conflict exists today because we have ethnic or cultural borders that are not only geographical (i.e. national borders) but also psychological. These boundaries are often mutable and situational, however. In fact, many anthropologists define ethnic identity and boundaries in different ways. One of the reasons for the different definitions is that people choose which ethnic identity to use based on context.<sup>3</sup> For instance, descendants of Native Americans in the United States have recently lived together with other Americans, received the same education, and shared the same values, such as respecting individuality and freedom. They may even have the same political ideology. On the other hand, they strongly identify themselves as Native Americans when this traditional culture is advantageous. This indicates that no matter how situational they are, boundaries continue to exist within the minds of people; hence, there is always the potential for conflicts. In other words, since it is human nature to recognize difference, ethnic and national conflicts are real and often less solvable than other issues in society.

Conflicts can be sorted into two categories: individual and group. The first, individual, is caused mainly by issues of individual identity, though a comparison of the traditions of two cultures illustrates different scenarios. Traditional Eastern philosophy (for example, like

Chinese and Japanese) emphasizes harmony among people, and sacrificing individual interest for the advantage of a group is regarded as a virtue. This ideal makes the societies less vulnerable to individual conflict from within. In contrast, American culture appreciates the value of individuality; hence, people are encouraged to express their individual values in a community, although this sometimes may lead to an argument within a group. A similar phenomenon is happening in the other parts of the world. High-speed information and transportation technology has caused more frequent interactions between different peoples, so the population in today's world tends to be more aware of distinctions, and humans have the chance to identify themselves within a certain group.<sup>4</sup> This transition is not bad news.

Emphasis on the importance of individuality has the potential to make society free from conflicts. There is one country in the globe that has been struggling for this social achievement since its creation: the United States. In other words, this attitude has been essential to uniting many people from various backgrounds in order to make one nation. In this country, it is possible to see an Israeli professor teach foreign policy to Arabic students, a Serb student study history with a Croatian student, a Kurdish family live next to Arabic Iraqi or Turks. To make this multicultural society work, a person must be regarded as an individual rather than an ethnicity.

Individuality may be emphasized here, but people also have overlapping national identities. In my experience in the United States, my individuality met with my Japanese national identity through the subjective definition of ethnicity, which is the process through which individuals identify themselves as different from others.<sup>5</sup> While living in Japan, I rarely had the opportunity to become aware of either my own individual identity or my ethnic nationality because Japanese society is almost homogeneous. Yet when it became necessary for me to decide what higher education to receive, I started to identify myself as an individual who is different from others within my closed community. My high school was a public institution that maintained a strict traditional Confucian idea, and most students and gradu-



ates received their education fully within the country. My intention of going to the United States to broaden my mind confronted my teacher's expectations. It was the first time I tried to find myself within the homogeneous society. After I moved to the United States, my national identity suddenly became important in my everyday life. Not only did I who encourage myself to be a "good" Japanese and know Japan's traditions, but also the outer world expected me to be a "good" Japanese. In addition, because of my physical appearance as well as my own ethnic characteristics, I had no choice but to accept the reality of being Japanese in American society. Through this process of subjective national identification, I learned to appreciate my national culture, my parents, and the history of my ancestors. The more time I spent in America, the better my understanding of my national culture became. In this way, many people, myself included, start feeling obligated to contribute to their own nation's future.

For many people in the United States, a strong national identity emerged after September 11 in the form of national condolences. The attacks encouraged a patriotic environment, symbolized by American flags that were hung up throughout the country. Even a "patriotic diaper" colored blue, red, and white, emerged in the market. Hanging up the American flag was not only a practice of the American community, but also of the international community in America. "We put an American flag up right away to show mourning toward America," said a teacher in an academic service department for international students at Athens High School in a suburb of Detroit, around which lives the biggest Arabic community in the North America.

However, there are people who felt confused by or cautious of this strong national identity that has developed since last September. An exchange student from the Middle East, who moved to the United States after the terrorist attacks, felt uneasy because of the patriotic environment. She was also uncomfortable at the airport when a security officer frisked her carefully and closely checked the contents of her baggage for five minutes, while Americans were allowed to go through quickly. A civil officer who moved from Romania six years



ago and recently received American citizenship refused to hang up an American flag on his front door because he was concerned about being too nationalistic—a condition that may lead to further conflict.

As these feelings suggest, the second category of conflict caused by strong national or ethnic identity occurs between groups. This is why one international student from North Europe says, “In the world today, many people think too much about only their national identity and too little about individual identity.” She has three cultural backgrounds—Estonian, Finnish, and Belgium—and speaks four languages. “I have hardly thought about what nationality I actually belong to,” she explains. Hence, for her, blindly adopting national identity is dangerous and may cause a major conflict between groups. Surely, if people do not think deeply about their own identity, it is easy for them to assimilate into the majority culture. Therefore, group identity without individual identity is dangerous. Extreme religious fundamentalists, for example, focus particularly on their ethnic or religious identity. Friedrich Nietzsche, a German philosopher of the nineteenth century, wrote in his book *Human, All too Human*, “People to whom their daily life appears too empty and monotonous easily grow religions.”<sup>6</sup> Religious fundamentalists do not think sufficiently about their own individuality and that of others. Although the rest of the world believes that the recent conflict in Afghanistan is a fight for democracy and against the terrorism, Islamic fundamentalists believe the war occurred because of ethnic differences. They also consider the military action taken by the United States and its allies to be aggression against all Muslims. In other words, they consider the conflict a clash between cultures of the West and the East. Demonstrations against Western (mainly American) influence have increased in major Muslim countries after America and the allies started air strikes over Afghan soil. This supports the idea of Samuel P. Huntington, author of *The Clash of Civilizations and Remaking World Order*, that the exportation of western culture results in counter response from non-Western countries.<sup>7</sup>

Since conflicts between groups sometimes lead to war, national or ethnic conflict should be considered more seriously than that between individuals. To solve conflict between different groups of people, there are three main steps to take, each of which emphasizes individual identity. The first step is to understand differences on an individual level. Individual characteristics should be accepted, admired, and celebrated. Huntington also believes that an understanding between the West and the rest of the world is crucial for coexistence and peace. According to him, non-Western civilization has been trying to adapt Western culture to gain economic wealth and military power. Responding to this tendency, the West should learn to accommodate Eastern culture. The role of the East is to require the West to profoundly understand Eastern history, religions (such as Islam), and culture, which underlie their way of life. Both the societal whole and the average individual should be responsible for understanding each culture. Ignorance and blindness of other cultures are imprudent in this global society because these attitudes are the main cause of conflicts.<sup>8</sup> For example, the United States and its allies started air strikes and sent ground troops into Afghanistan; however, how much do people in the West know about Afghani culture and history? In fact, they tend to judge Afghans only on the basis of information from the American media. While the mission is to destroy a terrorist organization, thousands of deaths of Afghan civilians are estimated.<sup>9</sup> It is a tragic situation. Individuals on one side agreed to strike other individuals; though the two sides had never truly tried to understand each other.

Individual educational exchanges between other major Muslim countries and America have been playing a major role in constructing peace between nations. For instance, the Prime Minister of Egypt, Afet Obeid, has a doctorate from the University of Illinois, and a great number of cabinet members in Egypt are American university graduates. These people are essential in maintaining a sustainable relationship with the United States. In addition, many forces that cooperated with U.S. troops during Desert Storm in the Gulf War in 1991 have

been trained at American military academies. Prince Saud Faisal of Saudi Arabia, who has a great influence on his country's foreign policies, is an alumnus of Princeton University. Similarly, eighty percent of the cabinet members of Saudi Arabia are graduates of American universities. These facts indicate a relatively good relationship between these two Arabic nations and the United States.<sup>10</sup> This cooperative understanding between Arabs and the United States is crucial. Indeed, respecting differences eventually leads to mutual trust, the second step to resolving conflicts.

Trust between individuals often becomes possible when focusing on common factors among different peoples. In this approach, it is important to regard others not merely as an ethnicity, but rather as human. For example, we all have been suffering from the conflict of September 11. Many school children who live in Palestine have to go through intense battlefields every day. For Afghan civilians who live close to U.S. military targets, every day is like September 11; they never know when their lives will be in danger. When the tattered American flag found at the World Trade Center on September 11 appeared in the Winter Olympic opening ceremony this year, people from all over the world paid tribute to the victims of terrorist attacks.<sup>11</sup> We all share the sadness of losing a number of precious human lives. Individuals can trust others: friendships are often born among people who share commonality, and a family tie is confirmed by shared kinship. Hence, by recognizing the common humanity individuals possess, trust can be created. Trust leads to mutual dependency among individuals, and among these individuals one can ask for help. In such situations, a conflict rarely occurs.

While achieving understanding and trust are psychological processes, practicing them is the final step to resolve or avoid conflicts. This last process is the most significant. People tend to believe that this is also the most difficult step because taking action sometimes leads to a certain degree of risk. For instance, although going to a place of conflict to help refugees is a direct way to devote oneself, there is potential danger. Taking action, however, is not always life-

threatening. Studying abroad is a crucial actions that provides individuals with opportunities for further development of understanding and trust among groups. They learn from other cultures and introduce their own culture.

The United States is a huge experiment. In this dynamic, multicultural society, people of different ethnicities meet frequently, and these three processes—understanding, trust, and action—are taking place. Nicknames such as melting pot or salad bowl are no longer appropriate to describe American society. Rather, the nation can be symbolized as an orchestra. Every person plays an important role, each different. In other words, to create harmony, each should consider herself as an individual who gives various melodies to the American community. If we lose any of the members we are not able to create beautiful harmony. This interdependency is a crucial characteristic of the society. In addition, a conductor who keeps order in the group is certainly necessary. These societal elements are essential, not for defining the individual's role to make the country work smoothly, but for making sure that each player is interlinked with each other within the community.<sup>12</sup> Although achievement is still a challenge, the United States is certainly moving toward an ideal human society, where "[our children] will not be judged by the color of the skin but by content of their character,"<sup>13</sup> that is, by their individuality.

In the world, the three steps have been or should be taken, especially by young people who have the great ambition to make society better. One Muslim girl who has lived in a village in Kashmir said in an interview, her eyes shining, "If I can do something for peace in my village, I will sacrifice myself. I am ready to die for people in my village."<sup>14</sup> Her village has been in danger because of the continuous exchange of fire between Pakistani and Indian troops. She was only ten years old. Although willingness to sacrifice life may not always be a positive attitude, as long as there are young people who have the strong determination to eliminate conflict, hope will never disappear from the world.

Hence, in all three steps, conflicts cannot be diminished without going through the process of understanding individual identity, developing trust, and having the confidence to practice both. It is more important to have understanding and trust between individuals—you and me—than between groups—us and them. This means that individual efforts can make change. After recognizing the importance of taking these three steps, there is one more quality we need to have: courage, like the girl in Kashmir has, to pursue the three steps and to make change in order to solve conflicts.



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# Socio-Cultural Nebula: Exploring the American National Identity



*Justin Mills*

“*Good is good, get get get, I want what you have, don’t touch mine.*” This is what a friend of mine said when I asked for his conception of the American national identity is.<sup>1</sup> Although this statement seems informal and absurd, it accurately reflects the dog-eat-dog world many people believe to be the American capitalist culture.<sup>2</sup> Whether my friend said this with the intent of comic relief is inconsequential. Whether he knew it, the informant reflects his cultural identity.

Many ambiguities surround the establishment, formation, and retention of a national identity. To what extent can a national identity be individualized? Does every individual, regardless of origin, possess the ability to engage in the national identity? Can an individual abandon his or her “cultural self?”<sup>3</sup> Can non-American citizens who reside in America create multi-national identities of their own? Is a national identity predestined, or does an individual exert control over it? There is not one definitive national identity in any society. America is marked by the diversity of both people and ideas.

The aim of this paper is not to establish a universal conception of national identity from the basis of history and documented facts. Rather, I am attempting to form a holistic definition of the national identity from my fieldwork with the widest possible variety of college students.

Hernando, a native of Sacramento, considers himself a Mexican-American, yet he declares himself to be of indigenously American descent. He states, "If you trace my lineage back, I am actually from the United States. My family came from Texas and California before it was taken over by the United States." Despite Hernando's Mexican ancestry, he prioritizes his American heritage and prides himself on his participation in the American identity.

Hernando defines the national identity as "the coming together as one people from a mixture of races, and basically cultures, including socio-economic borders and such." He proceeds to explain that because America is a "melting pot" full of diversities in cultures, ideas, and lineages, retaining a universal national identity is not possible. Hernando justifies this statement by offering an example of a country where he believes a national identity has been established. He says, "The Germans have created a national identity; what do you have there? Germans, people of German descent."

Iago, a nineteen year-old Puerto Rican male claims, "Socially and economically, I have an American identity. Ethnically, no, I do not have an American identity." A firm believer in humanism and individualism, he considers the concept of a national identity in any context to be irrational. He continues, "A national identity represses the evolution of social and economic diversification." Iago claims that he is altogether devoid of a national identity. Is this possible? Can a person willingly select which aspects of a national identity to apply to his or her personal culture?

Maya, an eighteen year-old native of India, insists that the national identity is "a lot of different people living together and being able to live together." Instead of classifying the nation as a unified whole, like Hernando has, she concentrates on the ability and necessity of co-habitation in America.

Maya herself is an excellent example of this co-habitation. While conducting the interview, we are constantly interrupted by many of her friends. She seems so sociable and comfortable; she could pass for a native-born American with little or no effort at all. She tilts her

head backwards, tosses her hair aside, and proclaims, "I love this country, I really do." Yet Maya has an Indian "cultural self" that she is reluctant to abandon. As a result, she indicates that she does not consider herself a part of the American national identity.

After asserting her exclusion from the national identity, Maya contends, "If I live here for a long period of time, then I might become Americanized; but I will still be Indian." If Maya were to become Americanized, which identity would she then be associated with? Maya's account reaffirms the need for the existence of multi-national identities in America.

Maya's last comments concern identity superiority. When I ask if she considers some identities to be stronger or more resilient than others, she automatically responds that she feels India's national identity is stronger than America's. She justifies this by stating that India's age, especially when compared to America's, allows for a much stronger cultural identity to exist. Maya also asserts that the Indian identity has remained static throughout the centuries. This rationale is explained by "naturalizing discourses"; "they [nations being observed] regularly represent particular identities as if they were rooted in biology or nature, rather than in history or culture, thereby making them appear eternal and unchanging."<sup>4</sup>

Pedro is a half-Mexican, half-Guatemalan freshman in college. He portrays the national identity as "the types of things that are universally valued within the whole nation." He continues, "American people are very self-focused, yet their progressive attitude benefits everyone." Much like Hernando, Pedro immediately associates himself with the American national identity.

Pedro also states, "National identities are always changing. For instance, in the 1800s, slavery was a significant part of the national identity. But we [the United States] aren't racist anymore, at least not purposefully." This lends additional credence to the idea that national identities are dynamic, as opposed to static.

Some descriptions of national identity incorporate standards or symbols. For instance, Melissa, an eighteen year-old female student

of Jewish descent, believes that one's ability to be included in the national identity relies upon one's ability to "fit" into the general American stereotype. She also feels that the national identity is formed through the creation of a prototype of the ideal American person. Although Melissa believes this stereotypical identity is essentially logical, she asserts that the methods with which America carries out this process are unsound. Furthermore, she is frustrated because she does not "fit" into what she thinks is the "blond, blue-eyed, white, rich, and cliquey" American prototype. Therefore, Melissa does not perceive herself as participating in the national identity.

To define the national identity, each informant uses key metaphors.<sup>5</sup> For instance, Melissa employs an organic metaphor to illustrate her idea of the American prototype. An "organic metaphor applies the image of a living body to something [else]."<sup>6</sup> In this context, Melissa applies the image of her "six-foot tall, blond, blue-eyed, white, rich, and cliquey" female to generalize how she believes American society as a whole views the national identity.

Conversely, most of the informants establish an outlook containing societal metaphors that refer to the social order.<sup>7</sup> Hernando uses this class of metaphor in his definition of the national identity as "the coming together as one people from a mixture of races." Additionally, Hernando's reference to socio-economic borders correlates with Schultz and Lavenda's idea of the social order.

The societal metaphor Hernando uses to describe his perception of the national identity develops via an articulated style of reasoning that "tend[s] to break the world into smaller and smaller pieces, which can then be organized into larger chunks."<sup>8</sup> Hernando demonstrates this reasoning as he describes the process by which individuals in a society assemble to form a national unity. Inversely, Pedro's comments demonstrate a global style of reasoning, indicated when he defines the national identity as "the types of things that are universally valued within the whole nation. American people are very self-focused, yet their progressive attitude benefits everyone." Pedro's beliefs are based in the concept of the nation as a whole. He then focuses on

how we, as humans, retain the ability and the obligation to benefit society.

The beauty of holistic fieldwork lies in the unpredictability and diversity of every informant. As a novice anthropologist, I have gained useful experience within the context of this fieldwork. Issues and hindrances that one would conventionally think of as problematic are as vital to fieldwork as the verbal exchanges themselves. In fact, if not for these aspects, the results of this research would be dramatically different

Contextual differences, informants' reasoning, and the various conversational frames—or “ways of showing how we mean what we say or do and figuring out how others mean what they say or do”<sup>9</sup>—differed from informant to informant. Asking the informants specifically about their conception of the national identity is the framework I employed to determine a holistic definition of American national identity.

I argue that it is the diversity of ideas, rather than the ideas themselves, that collectively forms the true American identity. Granted, each informant's perception of national identity is personally valid, but it is when they are put together that the real national identity is formed. Furthermore, if an individual constructs what he or she believes to be a definition of any given national identity and just one other person disagrees, it can no longer encompass the national identity, as the term “national” in this case connotes everyone. Instead, the national identity of America lies in each and every one of us and in our freedom to create our own personal interpretation of our country's national identity.



Notes

1. There is a distinct difference between “the” national identity and “a” national identity. “The” is used in the context of the United States and “a” refers to the universal construct.

2. In this discourse, the term “America” refers to the United States.

3. Emily A. Schultz and Robert H. Lavenda. *Cultural Anthropology: A Perspective on the Human Condition*, 5th ed. (California: Mayfield, 2001) 120.

4. Ibid., 328.

5. Ibid., 160.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid., 109.

9. Deborah Tannen. *That’s Not What I Meant! How Conversational Style Makes or Breaks Relationships*. (New York: Ballantine, 1987), 74–75.

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## The Positives and Negatives of *E Pluribus Unum*



*Paula Persoleo*

The core standards of America are founded, in principle, on the basis of its diversity and equality among citizens. Beginning with its Declaration of Independence, the United States distinguished itself from other modern nation-states by establishing a country of men who were different but equal. Yet, despite the unifying images America projects within and beyond its borders, the idea behind *E Pluribus Unum* does not resound as one might assume it would.

*E Pluribus Unum* was originally intended to be both a representation of the union of the thirteen colonies and an expression of the United States as a country formed by immigrants of many different backgrounds. Today, just the literal size of America would suggest the existence of a largely varied social atmosphere, even before one considers its influx of immigration from countries all over the world. In a way *E Pluribus Unum*—"out of many, one"—is a contradiction. Many different cultures are represented within American citizenry and within the country's physical borders, and they remain distinctive. The outmoded idea of America as the "melting pot" has been replaced precisely because people are not going to disregard their first cultural traditions to adopt "American" ones. Rather, their differences tend to perpetuate separatist notions and delineate cultural groups as clearly as borders delineate the end of one country from the beginning of another.



I believe that there are many advantages to embracing the diversity America has within its borders. Members of different cultures within the borders of one nation can benefit from each other, for example, by learning more about themselves through their variegated interactions. However, I understand the history of the foundation of this country—that this country has not always lived up to its motto. *E Pluribus Unum* may show the United States to be a country formed of many different cultures, and it may suggest the equality of all people, but even today many people, especially those of non-European ancestry, are often looked upon as secondary or non-citizens and are placed in a socially subservient position.

Since September 11, 2001, various communities within the United States seemed to be uniting for a time, despite the differences that typically undermine the original intentions behind *E Pluribus Unum*. Especially in places such as New York City, which is known worldwide as a mecca of diversity within its tightly confined parameters, people have been embracing each other as “people” rather than as “members of cultures other than their own.” But there has been a backlash as well, an increase in violent types of discrimination and prejudice in and near communities of Americans whose descent is Middle Eastern. Many non-Middle Eastern Americans blame all people who appear Middle Eastern as culpable for what happened on September 11. So the attention paid to culture, now, is based on the differences between Middle Eastern cultures and non-Middle Eastern cultures in America.

I wanted to explore how American citizens choose, especially after the events of September 11, to deal with cultures found within the United States that differ from their own. I chose to interview two people with strong, contrasting convictions about national identity and cultural differences. Although I have my own opinions about the problems that exist in making America work as a diverse national community, I wanted to challenge my informants’ responses to my questions and observe their reactions to my thoughts. I also wanted to compare my data from these two interviews with data from Eliza-



both Fernea's book *Guests of the Sheik* about Fernea's experiences as an American woman dealing with the rural Middle Eastern culture of southern Iraq. In her book, Fernea expresses her feelings towards Middle Eastern customs and habits, in particular those of the women in her studied community, and the changes that took place in her perceptions of them. Through this approach I hope to integrate my beliefs with the conclusion of my research.

My first informant was Lucy, a forty-five-year-old social worker whose nationality is Italian-American.<sup>1</sup> She is a first-generation American citizen married to a man with various European lineages. I asked her to explain how she interpreted people from cultures that differ from her own. Her response simply was, "I don't mind there being anybody different. It's just when something happens [i.e. the events of September 11] that I start to bitch about them."

Unsatisfied with Lucy's answer, I asked her whether she considered everyone in America to be "equal." She quickly opened up: "How can we be equal? You've got people out there, they don't want to work, they're lazy. And then you have go-getters who go out there and work and get what they want." As a social worker, Lucy wanted to stress that she saw many people who, in her opinion, did not want to earn their livings, and she blamed that on their social upbringing. "They don't know any better, so they aren't ever able to help themselves get out of [their poverty-level conditions]."

I knew that Lucy was referring to the people who lived in the poorest section of the city in which she worked. To get her to expand her point of view to include people of other cultures, I asked her if she was including non-citizens in her previous response. "Well, they're living here and they have to abide by our laws, then I guess I am. But they're not much better [than those living in local slums]. They're only taking away jobs that these poverty-level people can use to get themselves out of it, and that's not fair. Sometimes they sneak across the borders, and they only send all the money they make home." I interrupted her to try to point out that many immigrants work here because they cannot afford to support themselves and their families

in their own countries. Lucy replied, "Well, they shouldn't come here to do that."

I wanted Lucy to shift her perspective, so I asked her how she felt she would be treated as an American if she were in a different country. "Maybe not very well, depending on where I am," she replied. "I might be treated like their people, but I don't know about their customs or anything. I guess I would be treated like they were. I would hope so."

In light of the events of September 11, I asked for her opinion of Middle Eastern Americans and non-Americans in the United States. Lucy vehemently replied, "They all ought to be sent back to where they came from, and they shouldn't be allowed back. They don't belong here. You can't tell one from another! They all look the same, so get rid of all of them. This attack wouldn't have happened if they weren't here for so long." At this point I forgot that I was an interviewer, and Lucy and I argued for twenty minutes. As much as I wanted to stress that almost all Middle Eastern Americans were not connected to that event, she would not relent. To Lucy, American citizens whose cultures differed from her own were tolerable, unless she perceived them to be lazy or if they were of Middle Eastern descent.

At this point, with a fairly firm grasp of Lucy's views of American cultures, I ended my interview by asking her if she thought that there was any way for all of these different people who live in America to get along. She replied, "How can they get along? Everyone has different cultures, ways. You're not—it's not going to happen. Never. How can you get hundreds of different cultures to agree on something? You can't get ten people to agree on anything."

Exasperated and frazzled by my interview with Lucy, I went to interview Tom.<sup>2</sup> Tom is a twenty-one-year-old college student majoring in communications. He is a fourth-generation American of various European lineages, but mostly of German and Irish heritage. His mother is a state representative.

I began my interview with him as I did with Lucy, by asking him to explain how he interpreted people from cultures that differ from his own,

and again I got a short response: "I like that there are so many different cultures here [in America]. I think I'm pretty open to all of them."

I then asked him the same question about equality issues as I did Lucy. "Sure, everybody is equal. That's the law, isn't it? There are all kinds of laws now to ensure that equality prevails. Women, people who aren't American, everyone falls under the law anymore, and that's great."

I wanted Tom to analyze his response, so I pointed out to him that no one is born under the same social conditions, and therefore no one is equal to anyone else, even within members of his or her own society. To this he replied, "Well, that's true, but the opportunities are out there, and the laws are, too, so that's a help anyway. Even if people can't start on the same level, there's no reason for them to not be able to advance if they want to. I mean, if they work hard enough and they want it bad enough, and if they deserve to move up, then I think they will."

I asked Tom if he would include non-Americans in that statement, and he said, "Sure, if they deserve to be at the top, then that's great. I mean, they can't exactly get elected for anything, but they can do pretty much anything else. I've had a couple of professors who aren't from here [are non-Americans] and they've been fantastic. So sure, if they can do their job then I'm fine with that."

I knew that Tom had been abroad more than once, so I asked him how he felt he was treated as an American in those foreign countries. "Oh, I had the best time! Almost everyone was really great to be around, and the couple who weren't so great I just avoided. Granted, in London I got to speak English, and in Montreal I was fine because I knew French then, but I picked up on everything pretty quickly. I've been really lucky abroad."

At this point, I inquired how he felt about Middle Eastern Americans and non-Americans who reside in the United States, and he replied, "I don't know why everyone is making such a big deal about those people living here! If they've lived here for so long, then why should they be given any problems? Especially if they're Americans anyway! And if they're not, and if they really are in school, then what's

the big deal? Even if [some] shouldn't be here, then those who should shouldn't be criticized or anything."

Tom seemed very open and, because I shared his attitude—although less optimistic about how the cultures interacted—I wanted to know in what ways he thought they could improve relations. He replied, "Well, I know that many people have problems with different kinds of people around them, especially now, like I said, with the Americans who came from the Middle East, but I think that we're [Americans are] doing a better job now dealing with different people than we have in the past. I don't know how else things can get better, though. I mean, you can only pass so many laws, and there always will be people who will get away with breaking them, but things aren't too bad right now."

Elizabeth Fernea also had a unique opportunity abroad, as she documented in her ethnography *Guests of the Sheik*.<sup>3</sup> Her trip abroad, however, was for a full two years rather than for a week or a month. Fernea was apprehensive at best about leaving her culture behind to live in a rural Middle Eastern environment. Her handle on the Arabic language was faulty, and she was apart from her husband for the majority of her stay. She entered the situation in a negative fashion, and she was determined to keep intact her own customs as best she could, despite her environment. She told her husband, "If they can't take me as I am—if we have to make artificial gestures to prove we are human beings, too—what's the point?"<sup>4</sup> But as she entered the rural Middle Eastern environment, Fernea's convictions wavered; immediately she felt like an outcast in the unfamiliar place and, more than anything else, she wanted to fit in. So she donned an abayah, improved her Arabic, and learned the customs of the women in the village. Two years later, after many fumbblings with this culture that was so alien to her own, Fernea found it difficult to leave the women with whom she had bonded, confided, entertained, and learned. She came to a better understanding of their customs and beliefs, more than she thought was possible, because she opened herself up to the opportunity to develop understanding.

The way in which Fernea adapted to her surroundings makes me hopeful for the future of the relationships Americans have among people both within and outside of their own cultures. Fernea seemed so close-minded to her impending environmental shift at the beginning of the book, and yet the longer she remained with women who became close friends to her, the more she was able to let go of her former prejudices and include their unfamiliar culture in her own life. She realized that the women of Iraq, even those in the most rural of areas, were very much like other women she knew in America; they were resourceful and hard-working, articulate and intelligent, amusing and entertaining. They exhibited unique personalities in every possible way, and once Fernea realized this she allowed herself to open up to those parts of their lifestyle that really were different from her own.

It seems that the diversity towards which America strives is precisely what causes so many problems among its citizenry. It is difficult to allow various other cultures to “interfere” with one’s own; the idea that other cultures can melt into one’s own is more comforting to many. Yet many other people, especially those who have left the parameters of the United States, realize the impossibility of a true “melting pot” and embrace cultural behaviors and attitudes that are unlike their own. Both Elizabeth Fernea and my informant Tom learned to look beyond their personal cultural identities, without forgetting them, and accept the differences that surround them. I, too, have traveled outside of the United States and have discovered the advantages of being open to cultural differences. My experiences have allowed me to accept people on their own terms more easily than I would have were I not able to break out of my culture, even though only for a short period of time.

I wish others could realize that cultural differences run only so deep—Middle Eastern Americans have as much pride for this nation as do Americans of non-Middle Eastern descent. Nevertheless, I remain confident that time will ameliorate problems associated with cultural difference.



*Notes*

1. Name changed to ensure anonymity.
2. Name changed to ensure anonymity.
3. Elizabeth Fernea. *Guests of the Sheik* (New York: Anchor Books, 1969).
4. Ibid., 6.

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## A Word from the Publisher: Out into the Light



Robert J. Mooney

*“Everything that happens to you is your teacher. The secret is to learn to sit at the feet of your own life and be taught by it.”*

– POLLY BERRIEN BERENDS

*“He was so learned he could name a horse in nine languages; so ignorant that he bought a cow to ride on.”*

– BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Because one of my former teachers, William O'Malley—an essayist, playwright, and novelist—has taught in high schools and colleges for nearly a half a century, he has not a few things of interest to say about education. In his recent memoir, he works his way to the very crux of the endeavor when he says that none of us, no matter how intelligent and discerning, can truly understand anything meaningful if we remain uncomfortable with paradox, and therefore it ought to be the aim of all worthy education to create an atmosphere within which our students might finally—even if sometimes painfully—come to accept rather than dread contrarities.

Any pedagogical aim that falls short of this dooms those in our charge to the Grandgrind school of narrow literalism that Dickens evokes in *Hard Times*—as if the rote transference of existing data is all that is needed to prepare young men and women to lead full lives. It assists in condemning them (lest they find a way themselves, as they often do, in spite of us rather than because of us) to sit shackled in the damp and uninspired confines of Plato's cave, allowed to witness only metaphysical shows of imitations of reality.

Fiction writers and playwrights and poets must, if their work is ever to be worth experiencing, not only accept but embrace ambiguity. There is no way around this; there is no faking it. Art feeds on dichotomies of thought and feeling, and it is apparent that gifted writers such as Sarah Blackman and Laura Walter and Max Orsini, evidenced in their poems among these pages, are well on their way to learning to cope with the rich vicissitudes of symbols and figurative language, with the differences between "literal" and "literary" truth, between the accurate and the meaningful. On the subject of literature, O'Malley asks us in his memoir if human beings are corrupted angels (as in *Catcher in the Rye*) or savages held in tenuous check by society (as in *Lord of the Flies*), and he avers that the answer is yes. Or take this question: In 1600, was Queen Elizabeth an aged leader or an attractive young maiden? Yes, says Stephany Fontanone in her essay on aging sexuality in early modern England. The Queen painted herself with cosmetics (though their use was thought to be the work of the devil) to both appease a misogynistic society and to confirm her own power. How's all that for juggling contradictions?

Even in science, the law of complementarity argues that, if you hold contradictory truths at once, you are offered a greater insight into reality. Is the electron a wave or a particle? Yes. Is Ehrman Tapestry in Chestertown, depicted in Fred Chalmers' fine anthropological study in this issue, a simple shop or a subculture? Yes. Is a human being, as Elizabeth Mumford asks, a uniquely conscious individual who interacts with the outside world, or, like any other animal, an embodiment of a tangled skein of genetic codes? Yes again.

Our mission as teachers, then, cannot be the reinforcement of our own certitudes as we “know” them and have learned them ourselves, else we all—teachers and learners alike—sit agape at a wall of shadows. Instead it must involve the forcible eviction of those in our charge from the dim ersatz reality of Plato’s cave, out into the light. It is to foment intelligent doubt, to challenge the very certitudes that even we ourselves might hold dear, to baffle these young men and women into genuine curiosity, and from there guide them to an indefatigable eagerness to dig further, and then further still. It is, O’Malley reminds us, what education has always been about. It’s about leaving the cave, and in the pages of this issue we see one example after another of perspectives adjusting to the light of the life they are struggling to see more clearly. It is a joy for this teacher to witness, to adjust to that light.



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## Contributors



SARAH HANLEY BLACKMAN graduated *summa cum laude* in May 2002 with a degree in English and a minor in creative writing. She also received the Sophie Kerr Prize, for “having the best ability and promise for future fulfillment in the field of literary endeavor” and the Emil K.C. Hildenbrand Memorial Medal “for attaining the highest average in English during the four years of study at Washington College.” She loves apple pie, ornithology and long walks off short piers. She is moving to Los Angeles this summer to become a lotus eater.

FRED CHALMERS, from Hereford, Maryland, graduated in 2002 with a B.A. in anthropology. He was active in Lambda Alpha, the national honor society for anthropology, as well as in Omicron Delta Kappa. He was a captain on the Washington College Men’s Baseball Team. He would like to give special thanks to Dr. John Seidel and Dr. Jeanette Sherbondy for their guidance and support.

MICHAEL DUCK, of Ellicott City, Maryland, graduated *summa cum laude* in May 2002. He was awarded the Erika and Henry Salloch Prize as “the student whose achievement and personal commitment have contributed to the understanding of other cultures,” and the Norman James Humanities Award for Excellence as “the senior majoring in humanities who has shown academic distinction and represents the ideals of humanistic study.” Following his marriage to Stacey Myers in June of the same year, he began his studies towards a Master’s

degree in journalism at Philip Merrill College of Journalism at the University of Maryland. He thanks the editors of the *Washington College Review* for their support and their patience, as well as the professors who initially encouraged him with their responses to these manuscripts.

STEPHANY FONTANONE '02 majored in English. She thanks Dr. Kathryn Moncrief "for suggesting that I submit to this volume and for all of her encouragement and relentless guidance, especially with my neverending thesis-turned-dissertation project. I'd also like to thank Dr. Donald McColl for "imbuing" art history with so much passion and excitement. Lastly, a special thank you to my good friend Lord Salisbury for allowing me to reproduce the portrait of the queen...and anyone else who has endured my endless talk of renaissance drama—the coolest thing since ramen in a cup."

JOHN FITZPATRICK KILLEEN "is a virgo with long, radiant blonde hair. During the week, he works as a roofer in the Mayfair section of town and on the weekends you can always catch him at Louie's on Harbison Avenue. The notion of law enforcement by reward tickles his fancy."

ELIZABETH MUMFORD, class of 2005, is a native of the northeast region of Cecil County, Maryland. She is an English major and plans on getting a certification in secondary English education and showing rowdy high school students why they should continue to take classes in their native language. She blames "The Measure of a Man" on entirely too much Star Trek. Thanks are due to her mother, Michelle, and the dry wit of all the posse back in Cecil County.

YUKIKO OMAGARI, class of 2005, is majoring in international studies. Her hometown in Japan is a little city that lies in the south. "I would like to be a bridge that connects Japan and the rest of the world by studying abroad!"

MAX ORSINI will graduate in the class of 2003. "My mother tells me that when I was just an infant [in Brooklyn], she would read me Shakespearean sonnets on cold winter afternoons. She says that I seemed disinterested because I would always nod off after a couple of lines. As I got older, however, I began to read with passion." He moved to New Jersey where he began to play the guitar and later attended boarding school in the French Alps.

"As I get ready to enter my final year at Washington College, my studies here prove to be perhaps the most wondrous of travels. I am working toward a major in English with minors in gender studies and creative writing. I hope to attend grad school in New York...I suppose we can never get too far from home."

PAULA PERSOLEO graduated cum laude in the class of 2002. She majored in English and minored in gender studies and anthropology. She was elected to Lambda Alpha, the national collegiate honor society for anthropology. Paula wrote for *The Elm*, worked as its distribution manager, and served as a member of the Printers' Devils press club. She is currently working on her Master's Degree in English literature at Pittsburgh State University, Pittsburgh, Kansas, where she has a teaching assistantship.

EMANUEL LYNWOOD SIMMONS, from Landover, Maryland, will graduate in 2004. He is active in the Black Student Union, the Anthropology Club, and the International Relations Club. He is an anthropology major and a computer science minor.

WILLIAM SMILEY of Ocean Pines, Maryland, plans to graduate in 2004 with a major in Anthropology and minor in Philosophy. He is currently the president of the Encouraging Respect of Sexuality (EROS) Alliance, treasurer of the Sexual Assault Response and Awareness (SARA) Team, and a peer mentor.

LAURA WALTER grew up in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, but in the past year she has lived in London, Cleveland, the Philadelphia area, and Chestertown. She feels she's had enough moving experience to write "House" and is relieved to settle in Chestertown for her final year of college. She will graduate in 2003 with an English major and a creative writing minor. She would like to thank professor Bob Day for his revision suggestions for her poems "House," "Borderline," and "To Beat the Waves."









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